



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

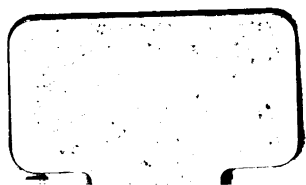
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>









PRACTICAL SERMONS.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY MOYES AND BARCLAY, CASTLE STREET,
LEICESTER SQUARE.

PRACTICAL SERMONS
ON THE
TEN COMMANDMENTS,

PREACHED IN
HANOVER CHAPEL, REGENT STREET,

BY THE
REV. G. D. HILL, M.A.
ASSISTANT CURATE.

LONDON :
FRANCIS AND JOHN RIVINGTON,
ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD,
AND WATERLOO PLACE, FALL MALL.

MDCCCXLV.



CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

CHRISTIAN DUTY.

MATT. xix. 17.

	PAGE
If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments	1

SERMON II.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

Exodus, xx. 3.

Thou shalt have none other gods but me	28
--	----

SERMON III.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

Exodus, xx. 4.

Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image	55
---	----

SERMON IV.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS, xx. 5.

PAGE

Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain . 86

SERMON V.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS, xx. 6.

Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath

Day 110

SERMON VI.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS, xx. 12.

Honour thy father and thy mother . . . 135

SERMON VII.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS, xx. 13.

Thou shalt do no murder . . . 169

CONTENTS.

vii

SERMON VIII.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

Exodus, xx. 14.

	PAGE
Thou shalt not commit adultery	198

SERMON IX.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

Exodus, xx. 15.

Thou shalt not steal	225
--------------------------------	-----

SERMON X.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.

Exodus, xx. 16.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour	256
--	-----

SERMON XI.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.

Exodus, xx. 17.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his ser- vant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his	285
---	-----

NOTE.—The Konds	311
---------------------------	-----

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

SERMON I.

CHRISTIAN DUTY.

MATT. XIX. 17.

If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

THIS condition of entering into eternal life is enforced by various motives, and under different forms of expression, in almost every page of the Gospel. "If ye love me, keep my commandments," said the Saviour : and again, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart ; this is the first and great commandment ; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself : on these two hang all the law and the prophets." It is needless to multiply quotations. It

is written in characters which cannot be mistaken, that to love God and our neighbour, is what our Lord bids us do to inherit eternal life. And love is the fulfilling of the law. "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely:—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."¹ Grace, redemption, sanctification, and salvation, are the gift of God: our part is to observe his laws; for he is infinitely wise, and knows what is best for us; he is infinitely good, and requires nothing from us but what will tend to our happiness; he is infinitely powerful, and can reward those who obey his will. His service does not consist in nice reasonings and refined distinctions, not in impassioned fervour and fitful resolutions of amendment, lightly

¹ Rom. xiii. 8.

formed and more lightly broken ; but in the steady discharge of duty, and the performance of what he has enjoined upon us. We must act, we must speak, we must even think, as he directs ; we must abhor and avoid what he proposes as an object of abhorrence ; we must love and desire what he recommends as lovely and good. And this, not partially or in a few favoured instances, but in every thing, at least so far as our efforts are concerned. We cannot indeed attain perfection ; there is no man that sinneth not ; and, in spite of all our watchfulness and resolution, we must often be betrayed into error : like a feeble traveller, journeying along a rugged and slippery path, who, in spite of all the care and caution with which he treads his way, often stumbles, and sometimes falls, not indeed by negligence or design, but because he is so weak as to be unable to guard against all accidents in performing so difficult a journey.

The true Christian does not content

himself with observing the letter graven on the stony tables of the old law, but adopts the spirit and import, which Christ has imparted to the commandments in the Gospel. It is not enough for him to keep holy the Sabbath Day, unless he does all he can, every day, to enliven the remembrance, and diffuse the knowledge of God. It is not enough for him to do no murder, unless he has subdued his malignant passions, and can say in truth that he hurts nobody by word or deed. His traditions will never suffer him to answer, "It is Corban," when urged to honour and succour his father or mother. And he will not prefer one duty to the omission of others. He will not be satisfied with offices of devotion, if his temper is harsh, censorious, or morose. He will not be satisfied with justice in his dealings, if he is also hard, unrelenting, and ready to exact the uttermost farthing. He will not be satisfied with being thought bountiful and generous, if he is also haughty and overbearing. He will strive in all

things to fulfil the law of God ; to attain the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ ; that his “ whole spirit and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of his Lord.”¹

Not, however, that he is able of his own strength to keep the commandments. He knows with St. Paul, that “in him (that is, in his flesh) dwelleth no good thing :”² it is God which worketh in him both to will, and to do of his good pleasure.³ To God then be all the praise for any good that his creatures can perform. Yet man is not irresistibly bound down to evil. He is yet a moral agent. He is yet, with all his weakness, an accountable being. He has yet a certain freedom of choice, and will, and resolve. Else why does he condemn himself, when he reflects on his past crimes ? Why is he covered with shame, when others detect, and upbraid him with them ? His own conscience tells

¹ 1 Thess. v. 23. ² Rom. vii. 18. ³ Phil. ii. 13.

him, that it was not impossible to do otherwise; and the crimson blush upon his cheek is eloquent to acknowledge his responsibility for offences.

Our Lord himself teaches, that the man who heareth his sayings, and doeth them, is like one who built his house upon a rock; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. But every one that heareth and doeth them not, is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand; and it fell, and great was the fall of it. There are some men, whose Christianity seems to consist entirely of outward profession: who know little more of the Gospel, than the form of faith and worship in which they have been brought up, and an external decency of manner, which they observe without sense of the duty they owe to God, without self-denial, or self-constraint, as and because they see it observed by others. They themselves would kindle into anger, if they perceived the tokens of respect offered them to be but dissimulation and mockery; yet little

better are the external signs of reverence, with which they venture to approach the Almighty. There are others, who seem to think and discourse more seriously on religious topics, but mistake means for ends, the less for the more important part of religion. They speak of the grace bestowed by God, to the omission of the duties he enjoins, as if Christian character consisted wholly in contemplation; or they employ themselves in curious speculations, mysteries, and subtle questions, while they neglect matter of vital import, and which calls for the exercise of all their energies, the divine morality of Jesus Christ. Contending eagerly about doctrines, or ceremonies, sometimes of little import, or none at all, they presently forget, that religion was brought down from heaven, not to amuse the understanding, but to purify the hearts, and regulate the lives of men. Their zeal enters into conflict with those opposed to them, malignant passions are roused, or a persecuting spirit stirred, and so

what faith they have becomes dead, and until they attach importance where they ought, upon a faithful discharge of duty, and obedience to the law of God, their Christianity must remain a barren profession, and ineffectual to convert the soul. Thus it is men are nominally of Christ, but derive no fruit from his mercies. Thus it is they cry, Lord, Lord, and do not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Thus it is they see their brother have need, and shut up their compassion from him; and how dwelleth the love of God in them? Thus it is, like the Pharisees, they devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers. Thus it is they "bind heavy burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." "Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doeth righteousness is righteous."

There are many others, who set aside the law of Christ respecting righteousness, and establish a law of their own, or a sort

of conventional practice. They sincerely believe themselves to be discharging the duties of a Christian : but, compare their manner of life with that proposed in the Gospel, and the one will be found utterly inconsistent with the other. In offices of Christian charity, and consideration for the wants, weaknesses, and sentiments of their fellow-men ; in the renouncement of pride, selfishness, worldly vanities, and worldly ambitions, which they profess at baptism ; in the subjugation of malignant passions, and discarding enmities, which the Gospel makes a condition of acceptance with God ; in all or some of these essentials to Christian character, men are found palpably deficient, who, nevertheless, sustain a reputation for Christian principle, and believe themselves faithful disciples of Christ. In this country, different classes of the religious community are estranged from each other by different habits of thought, different pursuits of life, different interests, manners, attachments, affections, passions, and,

above all, by the vast distance at which wealth separates itself from poverty, and luxury from destitution. Christianity proposes to mankind to become, as it were, one vast brotherhood, united in holiness and purity, as in love towards each other—united in fellow-feeling, and the spirit of their Lord : but to call our Christian community a brotherhood is a mere mockery of words ; and to say that the man of low estate may deem his fellow-worshipper of high degree to be his brother, would only announce, that we have forgotten those kindly relations, that might exist without derangement of the social system, but now seem generally extinct among us. And by how few, at least of the great ones of the earth, is the extinction felt, or is any attempt made to supply what is wanting in Christian practice ? Others, again, are taught to call their vices by the names of virtue, and so mistake disease for strength and vigour. Haughtiness is mis-named self-respect, and to be overbearing is but to maintain

one's proper place in society ; peevishness and anger are independence and courage ; backbiting and slander is impartial love of truth ; the dishonest prodigal is generous, the covetous frugal, and wantonness is innocent mirth. Another step brands real worth with the false title and ignominy of guilt : virtue in humble garb is contemptuously overlooked ; the modest is called a clown ; the contented and temperate is mean-spirited and a coward ; and he who will not play the sycophant to men dressed in a brief authority, is thrust into the corners of obscurity, as unmeet for converse with what is refined and elevated in society. And how many are made the dupes of such false pretences ! of how many is it the fate to look back with vain regrets upon their intercourse with depravity, that wore the mask of a little talent or grandeur ! And when once caught in the toils, they have not been suffered to escape. The fly struggles hard in the spider's web, but the treacherous destroyer en-

compasses the insect in new meshes, that he may secure and devour an unresisting prey.

Once more, some are ambitious rather of the name of Christians, than of living by the rules which Christianity enjoins. They "do all their works for to be seen of men;" and presently self-flattery, and the insinuating illusions of self-love, lead them into a serious persuasion, that they are the happy favourites of Heaven, though they do but little of what Heaven enjoins. In this they are faithful antitypes of the old Pharisees. They bear the cross without the sacrifice of one appetite, of one enjoyment, or one possession in the world. Others, by persevering in protracted industry, are content to struggle on to wisdom, and glad if at last it will make them wise unto salvation; but they at an easier and cheaper rate become proficient in understanding, and perfect in holiness. The flattering unction is laid upon the pride, idleness, and vanity of weak imaginations.

The seductive humour is indulged. And, setting up a private spirit as its only master, the wayward will become the real guide, and would, if it were possible, make laws for others.

To all such professors of Christianity, who do not practise its precepts, whether it is from misapprehension they err, or from inadvertency, or from perverse disposition and wrong affections, it cannot be an inappropriate exercise to examine the written law of God, to ascertain in some sort the force and import of his commandments, and to try their application to present circumstances and habits of life. Ask of our blessed Lord the marks of a true member of his kingdom ; his answer is short and full, " If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Consult St. Paul for the characteristics of those who are led by the Spirit of God : " The fruit of the Spirit," says he, " is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ; against such there is no law." Consult

St. John throughout his Epistle : " Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin : " " In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil : whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God." It is the manner of life, and conscience void of offence, by which a man may be known, and may know himself. Try yourself by the commandments. Do you obey the law written in the Gospel ? " If we say that we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." " And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."¹ These are the unerring marks, which every good Christian has, and every bad one has not. " In many things we offend all : " but in many things also we may obey. And when accident or infirmity falls into sin, our part is to confess, repent, amend, and be renewed in holiness. The cross of Christ is our remedy ; and to bear that

¹ 1 John, i. ii.

cross truly is to be assured of cure. To attempt escape by devices of man's invention, is an enterprise as futile as it is presumptuous.

Not to dwell on that love of God, which worships him in spirit and in truth, which reveres his name, believes his word, and does its utmost to impart a knowledge and reverence of him to others—which leans on his power, trusts in his goodness, hopes in his mercy, and awaits his eternity—consider that other precept, to love our neighbour as ourselves, which should be our guide in all intercourse with our fellow-men, and the corrective principle of all the actions of our lives. Hence charity unshaken by injuries or interests: “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Hence almsgiving: “Sell all thou hast, and give to the poor.” Hence the pardon of others, the condition of the pardon of God. Hence mercy preferred to sacrifice, and reconciliation with an angry brother the necessary preparation to approach the altar. Charity

never faileth. Nations in their counsels, and individuals in their conduct, avow submission to her precepts, and claim the sanction of her motives. Hence the asylum, the hospital, and the school, to relieve the distressed, to heal the sick, and instruct the poor. From the day that the first Christians held their goods in common, and the seven deacons were ordained to distribute to every man as he had need, it has been an acknowledged duty of the faithful, "to deal his bread to the hungry, and to bring the poor that are cast out to his house; when he sees the naked to cover him, and not to hide himself from his own flesh."¹

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, and do unto all men, as you would they should do unto you." Hence, among those who value the Gospel of salvation as the first of blessings, from the days of the Apostles, new messengers have not been wanting, to bear the cross as

¹ Isaiah, lviii. 7.

they did, into all lands, and reclaim the sheep which had gone astray, and bring them back to the fold of Christ. The corsair of Barbary has seen the messenger of ransom,¹ with a breviary and staff to confront lawless power, and the purse of charity in his hand to redeem the Christian captive. The Indian of the new world has heard ministers of the Gospel, corrupt as may have been their church, the intercessors nevertheless for his freedom, protesting at home and abroad against the cruelties and slavery which his ruthless conquerors imposed.² Nay ! in these days the very African is freed from his bonds. Christian charity has rescued the outcast of prejudice from the oppression that debased him. Christian charity has invited him to improve his intellectual and moral condition in the world ; to participate in the equal ministrations of a holy faith ; and to cultivate the happiness,

¹ Père de Redemption à Alger, &c.

² Las Casas. Vide Robertson's "America."

temporal and eternal, which it is the natural right of every man to pursue. In unalloyed benevolence she renews the lesson so hard to be understood, that what is best is also most wise, and that the relief of suffering humanity is the most grateful as well as the most noble duty, however degraded and prostrate may be the sufferer, however debased in the eyes of the world may be the object of generous interference.

Such is sometimes the triumph of God's commandment even over the selfish passions—over the avarice of man that would create a property in his fellow-men—over self-will, self-indulgence, and the love of arbitrary power. The limits of these are self. Self is their whole object, and a man under their control lives for himself alone. Would you then be freed from their tyranny? Open your heart in sympathy for your fellow. Let that love which you have for self go free, and expand into charity, which shall love your neighbour as your own soul. That

captive, which was confined to the narrow bounds of your own advantage, shall walk abroad more happy, more elevated, more strong in holy aspirations, when he consults the world's happiness, as he would his own.

Strive, then, to regulate your lives, not by any rule, which self may have a share to dictate, but by those tables of the written law, the end of which is love toward God, and toward mankind. This will promote your happiness in the present world, as well as in the world to come. Many there are, it is to be hoped, who have been protected by God's grace in the ways of holiness, from the day of their baptism to this hour—meek and anxious souls, ever struggling to obey, though conscious of the imperfection of their obedience, ever strengthened by the consolations of the Comforter, though humbled by a sense of their infirmities. In examining themselves they will doubtless find much to regret, much to confess, much to amend: but they will also find

much for which to be grateful. They will be spared the trying process of conversion ; from Christian infancy their heart has never been unconverted at all. They will be spared the pangs of sudden conviction, of fearful compunction, and stinging remorse amounting almost to despair ; the struggles, and inward conflicts, which the obstinate sinner knows full well. That troubled conscience, those bitter stings of memory, that trembling recoil from the prospect of the future belongs to the wicked, when reflecting on their state, and called on to reform. But habitual righteousness sits more easy on true Christians, as Christ's yoke is easy, and God's service is perfect freedom. They have come to their Redeemer that he " may give them rest : " that he may " feed them in a green pasture," and " lead them forth beside the waters of comfort." " Yea, though they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, they will fear no evil ; for his rod and his staff supports them."

And to try themselves they have a much more sure criterion than any inward monitions which self might have a share to suggest or stimulate. That with which they compare their lives is the rule of God's commandments, a test of fellowship with Christ far less deceptive than the heart of man, or impulse, or impassioned ardours. Strong impulses are but the means of moving those whom milder remedies will not affect: they are medicines of last resort, and always dangerous. Let our affections indeed centre in the Almighty: they cannot be better spent than in his service. Yet they will be but blind guides to his throne. Impatience will break down the sacred restraints which divine wisdom has imposed. Affection may waste itself in unfruitful fervours, and hardly discharge one of the duties, which divine laws enjoin. Let us serve God with reverence, making it our first business to obey his will, and not caring to intrude with familiarity into his presence: "Draw not nigh hither: put

off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

From the moral of a pagan story the light of nature seems to have taught the heathen this reverence of God, which is the true principle of obedience to him also. Semele, persuaded by her artful enemy, entreated Jove to approach her in all the splendour of heaven. The deity granted her request. But, alas, for her ambition! she was unable to endure so much majesty, and instantly expired.

It is not then an aspiration heavenward, it is not an effort of the imagination, or fervour of affection only, that will satisfy the wary soldier in the army of Christ. Do you keep the commandments? This is the watchword of the band. This is the challenge by which to try the most zealous: this the criterion, by which to prove the measure of their grace. Cherish every feeling of devotion. Light up the fervour of love in your hearts. But do not mistake the purpose

of stirring those affections. Do not mistake them for the end of your Christian warfare. They are but the means to encourage and support you to a faithful service. Do not mistake them for evidences of fidelity. You must prove that by works, by conduct of life, by presenting an image alive and palpable, of a disciple of the Gospel.

In the description of the blessed on the day of judgment, at the right hand of Christ are they, who, when he was an hungered, gave him meat; when he was thirsty, gave him drink; clothed him when naked; came unto him in prison; and took him in when a stranger. And they say unto him, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee?" And he answers, "Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Let us for a moment consider ourselves here assembled to represent mankind, and speak as if we were the only people upon earth.

Suppose this then to be our last hour, and the end of the world to be at hand; the last judgment set, the heavens opening above our heads, and the Redeemer coming in his glory, to judge us gathered together to abide his sentence of final reprobation, or of mercy. Were the eternal Judge now in the midst of us, to make the solemn separation between the sheep and the goats, what is it that would thrust us to his left hand? Would it be the defect of his mercy, the insufficiency of Christ's redemption, the reluctance of the Holy Spirit to impart grace, or the perverseness of human depravity that would not obey the commandments? It may be there would be more of us set aside, than have been prepared to reflect upon the subject. God grant that there might be many more, nay! as his mercy is infinite, that all might be summoned to the blessed places on the right. Whether we should be found a congregation of true believers, whose faith actuated our lives, or there would not be found ten righteous men among us, as of old in five cities, no

human tongue can tell ; God alone knows those who belong to him ; and man can hardly judge himself, much less a whole congregation of his neighbours. Yet of himself, and of his own conscience he can inquire, Am I walking in the way of God's law ? am I doing what he would have me do ? and avoiding what he would have me avoid ? am I of those, whose acts of charity to my neighbour can be accepted as having been done for Christ's sake, and to Christ ? And if in these things his heart condemn him not, then he will have confidence toward God ; but if his heart condemn him, God is greater than the heart, and knoweth all things.

Here, then, is our danger, and to this point should our efforts be directed, that we may escape the condemnation of the wicked. You who are of threescore years, fast filling up the term of human life, and you who are of threescore years and ten, tottering on the brink of no untimely grave, must feel, that this scene of a last tribunal pictured in imagination

to-day, will be a stern reality at no distant period : and you who are young and strong cannot tell how soon health and strength may fail, and the judge be beside you also. From this house of prayer you will issue forth, if God pleases, to mingle with the crowd, and engage in the business of life. You will witness errors, which fashion authorises ; and it is for you to determine, if you will obey the caprice of fashion, or the commandments of the Almighty. You will see vices in which too many indulge, and have to decide, whether you will follow the multitude to evil, or come out from among them. You will see irregularities, which custom has sanctioned into laws, and have to consider, whether you will be conformed to the world, or to the will of heaven. And may your choice be so made, and in such good season, that when you shall appear before the Saviour in his glory, you may be greeted as good and faithful servants, and invited to enter into the joy of your Lord.

If ever there was a practical proof that God is love, and that his commandments are enjoined with a view to our happiness, is it not contained in this monition to do the works, and this promise to reward the exercise, of our love one to another: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." On this principle of charity let us "labour to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." Let us do good, and daily renew the inner man by a lively, regular, uniform obedience to God's will. To the heart itself practice is a more cogent teacher than theory and precept: its discipline is more exact, its influence is more powerful, its exercise more regular and habitual. And may God grant his Holy Spirit to direct us to what is right, and just, and holy; to sustain us in the discharge, and finally crown us with the recompense, of Christian duty!

SERMON II.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS, xx. 3.

Thou shalt have none other gods but me.

THE ten commandments are comprised in two tables, as God gave them to Moses, "two tables of stone."¹ In the beginning they had been written in the souls of men, but soon were defaced and obliterated; and, as if to denote the corruption of human nature, the Creator found it better to intrust his laws to the marble than to us, and thought them more secure, engraven on senseless and crumbling tablets, than on our hearts. The first table enjoins our duty to God,

¹ Exodus, xxxi. 18.

and ends at the conclusion of the commandment concerning the Sabbath. The second table teaches our duty towards our neighbour. Our Lord himself sanctioned this division, when the lawyer “asked him, Which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”¹

“Thou shalt have none other gods but me.” This is the first commandment. The preceding words describe the God we are to obey, and with the description set forth two great motives of obedience. “I am thy God,” said the Almighty to the Israelites :—thy God, that is, to fight for you, and sustain you.² “I am thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt :”—who have already wrought

¹ Matt. xxii. 37.

² Deut. i. 30.

so great wonders for your deliverance—who have a claim upon your gratitude for the past, as well as upon your hope for the future. And these ties, both of gratitude and of hope, bind us yet more strictly than the Jews. We are the spiritual Israel, and true heirs of the promises. He is our God by a more excellent covenant than he was theirs. That people wandering in the wilderness was but a type of the Church of Christ militant on earth. That slavery in Egypt was but a type of the bondage to sin and death, from which Christ has redeemed us all. That promised land was but a type of a higher and better Canaan, to which we hope to attain by the guidance and grace of God.

The first commandment contains the groundwork of all duty, as the first article of the Creed is the base of all faith. The great foundation of religion is the existence of one God, a supreme Being, not fashioned and defined like the substances of this material world, but un-

limited by time or space, a spirit pervading the thousand spheres of his own vast creation, present before the worlds, and in the worlds, and after all worlds: God of Gods, and Lord of Lords: not receiving any thing from another, but being himself the ultimate source of all things: having all other natures, powers, perfections, attributes united in his nature, and dispensing them to others at his will: the sole cause of all existence, with the faculties, and properties, and organisation, and energy, with which existence is endowed. And the uniformity of design that pervades creation, and the apt relation of its parts one to another, evince the unity of the counsel by which all was created and connected. The universal order of the boundless heavens, and systematic coursing of ten thousand worlds; the magnitude of earth determining our strength, and the depth of atmosphere the condition of our fluids; the incomprehensible relations of mind and matter framed to meet the necessities of each; the vital action of organs independent of

our will, when our faculties are not capable to direct their action, and the submission of other organs to the impulse that proceeds from thought; the eye formed with relation to the extent and grandeur of creation which it embraces at a glance; that of man for the air, that of fishes for the water which is their dwelling-place:—in a word, the whole book of nature every day repeats what the Almighty spake by his prophet, “I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God.”¹ He has no competitor. In receiving his commands we shall find none to countermand. In obeying his will, we create no jealous enmity of a rival who can dispute or gainsay it. In devoting ourselves to his service, we provoke no envious persecution of his antagonists. In giving him all our hearts, we throw no apple of discord among those who can control our destinies. We are not as the heathen, whose rabble of divinities had conflicting wills, and passions,

¹ Isaiah, xliv. 6.

and interests, like those of men ; and the votaries of one became exposed to the hostility of another. Our God is God alone, and supreme ; and none can stand before him, or wrest any thing out of his hand. And in the hosts of heaven none can say unto him, “ What doest thou ? ” and in all the kingdoms of the earth existence hangs on his support.

This is the Being who commands us to have none beside himself for our God. This is the Being whom alone we are to regard as clothed with divinity. Let us then consider, first, how we should bear ourselves towards him to have him for our Lord ; and, secondly, how we are to avoid having any other gods. And may the grace of his Holy Spirit be with us, both to enlighten our understanding, and to warm our hearts with gratitude, and hope, and love towards him.

There are two things essential to our having the Lord for our God,—that we should think of him as God, and that we should serve him as becometh God,—ac-

according to the paraphrase supplied by the Church Catechism ; that we should " believe in him, fear him, and love him, with all our heart, and all our mind, and all our soul, and all our strength," in the inner man ; and that we should " worship him, give him thanks, put our whole trust in him, call upon him, honour his holy name and his word, and serve him truly all the days of our life," as regards our external and general conduct and service. We must believe in him : for " he that cometh to God must believe that he is :"¹ nay, more ! we must believe that he is an eternal and all-perfect Being, the Maker and Preserver of all things, and " the rewarder of them that seek him." We must fear him : so as to " work out our salvation with fear and trembling ;"² yet with a dread of offending him, rather than of the penalties of his vengeance, lest we become like the devils who believe and tremble. We

¹ Heb. xi. 6.

² Phil. ii. 12.

must love him : for his gracious attributes, for his goodness, for the beauty of his holiness, for his mercy, and his truth. And these things we must do with *all* our heart, and with *all* our mind, and with *all* our soul—in a word, with *all* our inner man : for no one can serve two masters ; we cannot serve God and Mammon. Thus will he frame his disposition, who really has the Lord for his God. He will shrink with horror from infidelity in thought, and, what is much more common, and more important to insist upon among ourselves, in practice and manner of life. He will repress at once unworthy sentiments, and blasphemies, and levities, when they rise in the imagination. He will dread, lest he should seem to be indifferent, or others should think him regardless of the power and goodness of Providence. And, above all, he will guard himself against those determined and habitual sins, which, as they are continuous and unceasing, present a living and practical evidence, that the sinner

never thinks of God at all, or that he does not believe the Lord to be his God, or that he has never considered what such a belief requires of him.

For the discharge of external duties is no less essential than a devout disposition, to those who have the Lord for their God. They must worship him: "not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is."¹ They must give him thanks: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."² They must put their whole trust in him: "Ye that fear the Lord, put your trust in the Lord."³ They must call upon him: "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." They must honour his holy name and his word: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?"⁴ They must

¹ Heb. x. 25.

² Ephes. v. 20.

³ Ps. cxv. 11.

⁴ Hebrews, ii. 3.

serve him truly all the days of their life : for who can believe in so great a Being, and love him, without becoming his faithful servant ? “ If ye love me, keep my commandments,” said the Saviour : and therein is the sum of all the service his creatures can offer to their Creator.

“ As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,”¹ said Joshua, who had long since shewn his trust in God’s promises ; “ If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us.”² Moses too left an example of true service, when he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, and chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Anna too, the aged widow, left an example of true service : for she departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day ; and with Simeon, the just man and devout, who waited for the consolation of

¹ Joshua, xxiv. 15.

² Numbers, xiv. 8.

Israel, she spake of the Lord to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Abraham left an example of true service, when he went away from his home, and his kindred, at the bidding of God, not knowing whither he went; and again, when he was tried, and offered up Isaac his son, accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead. Stephen left an example of true service, when he was stoned, calling upon God, and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit:" and he kneeled down and prayed for his murderers, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And it were well for us, my brethren, if, like Joshua, we took account of our households and dependents, and of the means we adopt for their godliness, when we inquire, whether or no we will serve the Lord. And it were well to bear in mind Moses' self-denial, when Mammon and the guilty pleasures of the world come in competition with Christian duties. It were well to remember Anna's prayers, when the home hears no voice

of family devotion, the pillow witnesses no whisper of heavenward aspirations, or the open gate of God's house in vain invites to public worship. It were well to remember Abraham's faith, when trials press hard upon the troubled spirit: and to struggle hard for a share of Stephen's charity, when crosses and afflictions sour the temper, and petulance embitters animosity, with which we regard imputed authors of our misfortunes.

But it is time to consider how we are to avoid having other gods beside the Lord.

The idea of more than one being of perfect and infinite attributes is in itself a contradiction. One supreme governor precludes the existence of another. There cannot be two beings, each almighty. There cannot be two Creators, each infinite. There is then, and reason might have told all the world, that there could be but one God. Yet man without the revealed Word has in all ages believed in many gods. He has worshipped them.

He has ascribed power to them. He has attributed virtues; and he has attributed the basest depravity and crime. He has pictured to himself their conflicting wills and passions; and yet not found it inconsistent to serve them all. He has adored the sun, the moon, the stars. He has offered his polluted sacrifice to the very beasts and reptiles, with which the Creator has replenished the earth. He has fallen down to a stock or a stone, and prayed unto it, and said, "Deliver me, for thou art my god." Lumpish matter has been invested with divine attributes; each sage block become a governor of the universe; and a clod made superior to a man. Or with darker superstition abominations have been offered at the shrine of cruelty: a Moloch's altar has been smeared with the blood of human sacrifice; and the grim idol drenched with tears of human suffering: man's offspring passed through fierce unhallowed fires; and the shrieks of perishing children drowned in the loud roar of drums and

timbrels.¹ Others with monstrous shapes and sorceries have disguised their deities in brutish forms. Animate creatures have presided here, and there inanimate. Yet all have been esteemed deities. Amid the rabble of false gods, the only true God has been neglected and forgotten. And whatever may be the voice of nature to re-echo the voice of the Almighty, to the heathen she has been as a mute and mystic sibyl, and left revelation to teach, that "the Lord our God is one Lord."²

There is not perhaps in this a precise pattern of our danger. We apprehend, that our Christian brethren of the Church of Rome have been on the verge of a similar folly, when they have adored the Holy Virgin, and Saints, and Angels, as if they were in the place of God; or imputed to them divine attributes; and prayed to them, as if, like God, they were present, and could hear every where, and could save all their servants. Protestants

¹ See note at end of vol.

² Deut. vi. 4.

recoil from the direct worship of a specified creature. But they also often set up obscure and indeterminate conceptions into the place of God, and ascribe his attributes, and even his works, to something, of which they have not formed a distinct idea, much less have they reduced it to a distinct personification. They accustom themselves to represent fortune, or chance, or human talent as directing what is under the control of Providence; or they speak of nature as the mistress of that material creation, which the hand of God produces and sustains. Hence the lessons and chastisements with which God would instruct his people, are rendered of no avail. This man's object of worldly regard is snatched from him: and he is deemed, and deems himself unfortunate. Another languishes under protracted disease: and his malady is traced with scientific accuracy to its origin: but the counsel conveyed by the haggard cheek and sunken eye, as regards the future, is never dreamt of. Death makes his ra-

vages around, and tells no tale of warning. The young, the hale, the strong, bid him take the old and wretched, who are his due : he takes the young and gay, and those that feared him least he carries off the first : yet their companion discovers some special infirmity or accident has caused their end, and goes on himself secure. The destitute survives the opulent ; the feeble wraps the athletic in his shroud ; stout corpulence is but the sleek disguise of a fatal distemper ; beneath the bloom of beauty lurks the pale cheek of premature decay ; and in the smile of innocence is the heavenly hope that soon will be accomplished ; and yet in all these the lookers on, cold and insensible, see no hand of a supreme God : they recognise no sign of overruling Providence : they discover but the operations of nature, and of nature's laws ; and investigate physical causes and relations : but not one arrives at the conclusion, that the life is long enough, which has answered life's great end.

This, then, is to break the first commandment, if we ascribe that to accident, or second causes, which Providence, the great first cause, has in its wisdom or its goodness appointed. He who will not see the hand of the Almighty in the concerns of men, will soon set up himself, or something in his own heart, to be the Almighty's rival. This was the wretched blindness of Pharaoh, who would not discern the divine power working miracles in Egypt, when the magicians did likewise. And his heart was hardened; though for this very cause was he raised up, that God should shew in him his power.

Some habituate themselves to rely on human agency, until they regard it as alone and supreme in ordering the concerns of the world. They set up man, and the faculties of man, into the highest place, and forget, that there is One, who is above and over all. They seem to think, that there are beings and causes independent of God. Nay! they will

demand themselves to be obeyed, or urge that others should be obeyed, even in that which is opposed to the revealed Word. This, too, is to break the first commandment. This is to have other gods beside the Lord. This is to be like Moses at the waters of Meribah, when he did not sanctify God in the eyes of the people of Israel; and therefore he was not permitted to bring the congregation into the promised land.¹ This is to be like Herod arrayed in royal apparel, and seated on his throne, and hearing the people shout, "It is the voice of a god," when he made an oration: "And immediately an angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory."²

Others, again, who perceive the care of God guarding the order and harmony of the natural world,—who tremble at his avenging arm conspicuous in the pestilence, the famine, the earthquake, and the storm—yet overlook his government

¹ Numbers, xx. 12.

² Acts, xii.

of the moral system, and think him not present amid the mighty workings of the wills and affections of mankind. From the imperfect distribution of present happiness or affliction, they infer a disregard of good and bad, and forget that difficulties are necessary to a state of probation, and the most exalted virtues must be tried by embarrassments. The success of treacherous skill they consider as the reward of villany; and from the misfortunes that harass the righteous, they argue, that the Almighty regards not integrity with present favour, or that he regards it not at all. Empires may rise and fall by the virtues and vices of a people; moral convulsions may shake the very being of society to its foundation; the tempestuous whirlwind of human passions may be directed through a course of horrors and enormities to a beneficent result; and yet the Almighty hand that guides the whole remains invisible to their perverted understanding.

Once more, and most commonly of all,

we break the first commandment, when we "trust in uncertain riches," more than "in the living God." This is that covetousness, which St. Paul expressly terms "idolatry." Wealth is heaped upon wealth, often but to breed new wants, and make us greater beggars than before. It enjoins new toils, and prompts new cares. It engrosses all the affections, as it has long ago occupied every aspiration and ambition. And "if," says holy Job in his affliction,—“if I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; this also were an iniquity; for I should have denied the God that is above.”¹ “Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches,” said David, when he prophesied the fall of Doeg.² And, “children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God,” said our Lord himself.³

¹ Job, xxxi. 24. ² Psalm, lii. ³ Mark, x. 24.

These then, and such as these are the habits of mind and life, which we must avoid if we would keep the first commandment. The power and wisdom of God are infinite. His providential care penetrates to earth's dark centre, preserves and orders all things above and below, threads the whole creation, and suspends it, as it were, the footstool to his throne. Where ends the mighty pile, reared by the fiat of the heavenly Architect? where is the boundary wall that looks into the vale of non-existence? where is the strange abode of nothing? or is there no proud period of the plan, to pronounce the work accomplished, the creation closed? has the universal Father impregnated with a breath the womb of distant space, and brought forth brother creations from inanity, barren now no more? With the same ease he summons into being the single grain, and all the vast magnificence of worlds. "Let there be light: and there was light." The sun came forth like a bridegroom out of his

chamber, and rejoiced as a giant to run his course. The dark abyss was illumined by his splendour, and the orbs of our heavens borrowed refulgence from his fire. Who knows that there are not other systems, and other suns beyond? who is he that can set Omnipotence a bound? "The Lord omnipotent reigneth." "The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, and who shall disannul it? His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" "O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all!" "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

Open your eyes upon the creation round: Christ himself gives the lesson in the 6th of St. Matthew and 12th of Luke. Behold the heaven, and the earth, and the wise economy of the universe. Was ever machinery so skilfully adapted? was ever family so providentially supplied? was ever empire so well governed? All in their different ranks and stations: each to sustain his own part, and discharge his

own proper duties : yet all linked together in indissoluble dependence. Some subordinate, and some superior ; mineral, and vegetable, and animal. And all flesh is not the same flesh ; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another of beasts. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial. God has made them all. He has made those of heaven, which are immortal ; and those of earth, which are perishable. He made that great leviathan, which took his pastime in the waters : he made the worm, and little insect which we tread upon. He made the oak, the stately monarch of the forest, under which have sat the generations of our forefathers : he made the flower of the field, which springeth up in the morning, and ere the night fall, it is cut down, and fadeth away. And from the least to the greatest his Providence provides for all. He sustains the little birds, that invoke him with the melody of their morning song : “ They sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father

feedeth them." He directs the coursing of the spheres; and the heavens declare his glory; and their words are gone out into the ends of the world. And the flowers, whose beauty is so soon withered and gone—he clothes them so superbly in that moment of their transitory existence, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them. And you, my brethren, whom he has made in his own image, whom he has enlightened with his Spirit, whom he has called into his own kingdom—can you believe that you are overlooked—that you alone, of all the creatures of his hand, are exempt from obedience, or not beneath the eye of his fatherly regard? "Are ye not much better than they?" And if in this life there seems to be some disorder in the recompense of good and bad—if it seems that virtue is not always favoured, and punishment is sometimes slow in pursuit of vice—consider the eternity of him whose counsels direct the whole. Consider how little we are able to fathom his

purpose, or understand his designs. The duration of the world's existence scarce unravels the thread of a single dispensation: how then can man of threescore years and ten comprehend the eternal justice to be dealt to the impenitent, and the mercy he has in store for them that love him, throughout all generations.

Of his goodness every thing that is nourished and sustained around us bears abundant evidence. He does not wrap himself up in abstraction regardless of the concerns of his creatures. His love is over all his works. His fostering care cherishes, directs, supports; and that which he has deemed worthy of existence, he deems worthy of preservation also. "By him all things consist." "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works:" boundless as his universal labours, and endless as all the ages of eternity. The whole creation talks aloud of his bounty, and echoes with repetitions of his kindness. That carol of songsters of wood and field, when

spring puts forth new buds and verdure : that lighting up of heaven's luminaries, when the morning-star preludes the dawn of day : that gorgeous apparel of bloom and foliage, with which nature decorates her shrines, and robes her priesthood :— these all constitute the worship of one vast temple, the world, from which the voice of praise is offered to its Creator ; and each morning from the vale that is watered by a thousand springs, and from the dewy meadow, and the mountain-side, the mists ascend as grateful incense to the Lord.

Let not man shew himself the sole being of creation insensible to the goodness of his Creator. Let him too adore, and worship, and as he is endowed with the higher faculties of moral responsibility, let him also serve. Let him love God with all his heart. In this table of the commandments, as well as in the second, love is the fulfilling of the law : for he that sincerely loves God, will also sincerely serve him.

“Thou shalt have none other gods but me.” Let us not deem it impossible to break this commandment ; but rather consider, in how many ways we may really remove the Almighty from the first place in our hearts, and admit others to the seat he ought to occupy. Let us not dissemble with ourselves on this the foundation of all religion. For, he that hath not the Lord for his God, how can he believe or do any thing, that God has said, or appointed to be done ?

SERMON III.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

Exodus, xx. 4.

Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image.

To represent God, that is, or be an object of worship.

The first commandment enjoins, that we shall have none other gods but the Lord. The second is not a mere repetition of what was included under the first. It is not an idle tautology renewing the same order to have none other gods. It is not a verbal variation with the same sense, "Thou shalt not worship other gods." The object of all divine honour was defined and determined before. The

purpose now is, to direct men in the manner of worshipping the true God: to forbid, first, that any image should be made to represent the Almighty; and secondly, that any image should be made, or set up, under any pretence whatever of receiving divine honours.

“God is a Spirit.” His nature, his being is infinite and incomprehensible. He is invisible, “whom no man hath seen, or can see.”¹ He is present every where; and cannot therefore be circumscribed by form, or represented by figure. He fills all space; and to set up an image, or what makes pretence of being an image of him and his divine attributes, is to debase and degrade him in the eyes of men. It is to prompt conceptions, that drag him down from his throne of supreme majesty, and make his creatures blind to the supreme wisdom and power of their creator. It is to fill the ignorant with grosser superstitions, and to suggest to

¹ 1 Timothy, vi. 16.

the more intelligent ridicule of the religion into which they have been adopted.

Seeing is, perhaps, more than any other, the sense that exercises an influence upon the understanding and heart. From it, so far as we can judge, first ideas are conveyed to the opening intelligence of infancy. From it assuredly, in after years, both youth and mature manhood most readily receive imagery into the mind, and conceptions are prompted in accordance with what is presented to the eye, and willing credence is granted, not only to what is seen, but also to what seems to be a result and portion of the view. It is the most prompt of all instructors, so that example is better than precept, and what words cannot convey sight embraces at a glance. We have affection, too, for that which is beautiful, and when pleasing images are presented, vision fills us with enjoyment and delight : it loves to sport beneath the shadows, and revel in the recesses of distance : it lights up the mind with a cheerful prospect, and dispels

the sadness that confinement had entailed. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun," says the Preacher.¹ A gloomy prospect, fraught with suffering and pale affliction, fills the soul with sadness; and a picture of horrors provokes the shudder of abhorrence or alarm. That which is pure and true, presents pure and real subjects of meditation: it corrects the thoughts, and summons up chaste and true images for the mind's eye to dwell upon. That which is inconsistent with truth, prompts what is untrue, and perverted representations impart perverted ideas and notions. It has been well said, that truth is life, not of the body only, but also of the soul: and if fictitious images are continually presented to the sight, fictitious imaginations and false sentiments will debase and degrade the nobler faculties of the inner man, and fill him with gloom and superstition. "The light of the body is the

¹ Eccles. ii. 7.

eye : but if thine eye is evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." And, "if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"¹

What can be more affecting than a just representation of the Saviour crucified ! The Son of God, Jesus Christ, the second person in the Trinity, having vouchsafed to take upon him our nature, his body may be portrayed by an image, and without sin, if that image is not to receive divine honours. But in this case also it is remarkable, that we have no traces of his bodily likeness or features : and he himself has appointed a very different memorial of himself, the holy sacrament of his body and blood. And to represent the divine essence by a material substance, to frame a figure of the invisible Godhead, or paint the Father and the Holy Spirit, is absurd, as it is impious and profane.

Hence the Apostle preaches at Athens :

¹ Matt. vi. 22.

“We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.”¹ Hence the Prophet; “To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold. He that is impoverished, chooseth a tree that will not rot. It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.”² Hence the injunction: “Thou shalt not make with me gods of silver: and if thou make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not make it of hewn stone.”³ Hence Moses reminds the Israelites: “Ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake to you out of Horeb.”⁴ Hence Solomon exclaims: “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the

¹ Acts, xvii. 24. ² Isaiah, xl. 18.

³ Exod. xx. 23. ⁴ Deut. iv. 15.

heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?"¹ Hence the Apostle declares: "God that made the worlds, and all things therein, seeing he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing."²

The molten calf, which the Israelites set up while Moses was on Mount Sinai, was to represent the true God. It was not an image of any strange deity. It was described; "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt:"³ the very title God gave himself: "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage." Aaron, who had made it, built an altar before it, and proclaimed: "To-morrow is a feast to the Lord: and they arose up early, and offered burnt-offerings." The name of the true God is used in the ori-

¹ 1 Kings, viii. 27. ² Acts, xvii. 28. ³ Exod. xxxii. 4.

ginal : and the plural number is not unusual to denote him ; for “ the Lord thy Gods,” occurs a hundred times in the law. And so the Psalmist exclaims of them : “ They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image : thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.”¹ And the Lord said unto Moses, “ Thy people have corrupted themselves : they have made a molten calf, and worshipped it : now therefore let me alone that I may consume them.”

It was to represent the true God, that the mother of Micah made a graven image, and a molten image, with an ephod, and teraphim, and a Levite to be the priest. And the image was set up by the children of Dan all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.² And “ in those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”

Again, it was to represent the true God,

¹ Psalm cvi. 19. ² Judges, xvii. 3 ; xviii. 3.

that Jeroboam made two calves of gold.¹ He also proclaimed them under the title, which the Lord had himself adopted: "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."² Thus he too ranked himself among those, whom the Apostle describes, as "changing the glory of the uncorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things."³ "And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the calf, even unto Dan:" and from worshipping an image of the true God, they soon proceeded to worship false gods: and so fell into grosser superstitions and idolatries, until the avenging arm of Heaven cut them off as a nation from the face of the earth.

¹ The idolatry of Jeroboam is distinguished from that of worshipping false gods in 1 Kings, xvi. 31, where it is said of Ahab, that, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, he went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

² 1 Kings, xii. 28.

³ Rom. i. 2, 3.

So that the second commandment does not stand alone in forbidding the worship of images, and the use of them to represent God. Yet, as a distinct command, it is a prohibition so precise and express, that, to diminish its force, and attach its purport, if possible, to another object, the Church of Rome makes it a part of the first commandment, and understands both almost in the same sense. They have admitted pictures of the Holy Trinity, and images, before which they bend the knee : and they attribute to that which we call the second commandment, the force only of a particular specification of one species of that sin, which is generally forbidden in what we call the first. The tenth commandment, which refers to the sin of coveting alone, they divide into two : their first table contains but three, and their second seven commandments : and so that relative to graven images is often omitted altogether in their books of devotion.

It is a Roman Catholic maxim, that

the pastors of the true Church of Christ may be distinguished by the moral influence which their teaching and institutions are calculated to exercise, and by the spirit which animates their whole body. Thus they interpret our Saviour's precept, "Ye shall know them by their fruits;"¹ justly forbidding to pass hasty and unauthorised sentence upon individual ministers of religion, and yet more justly prohibiting, that we should conceive doctrines to be true, because he who professes them appears honest, holy, pious, amiable, or benevolent. But to adopt their correct interpretation of our Saviour's words, consider what has been the influence of image-worship, and the invocation of saints, with which they serve and adore the incomprehensible deity. There is hardly a country where these forms of devotion have held a full ascendancy, in which the masses of the people are not

¹ Matt. vii. 16.

degraded, ignorant, and superstitious.¹ In Europe the noblest forms of men inhabiting the fairest regions, the Italian, the Portuguese, the Spaniard, the multitude, I mean, of their population, are debased low in the scale of civilisation, yet lower in knowledge and the action of intelligence, involved in all the gloom of oppression and mental darkness, without the energy of a free spirit, and without the correction of elevated principle. Not to dwell on the Roman Catholic portions of the British empire, contemplate the vast regions from Cape Horn almost to the banks of

¹ Roman Catholics usually point to Belgium as the country now exhibiting their religious system in most perfect operation. And Belgium may seem an exception as regards the degradation and ignorance of her people. But Belgium has been a few years only independent of Holland, and is to this day under the influence of French habits, opinions, and intelligence; and few good Roman Catholics will claim France as a country in which their church holds complete ascendancy, or exercises its due influence.

the Mississippi, and how wretched is the want of mental cultivation, which degrades and cramps the energies of the nations ! Religious thoughts are absorbed in the externals of religion, a costly shrine occupying the place of God in the heart. Men's ideas have been led astray, and their notions of God, his attributes, and dispensations, perverted, until infidelity with its dreary waste occupies the length and breadth of the land. The miserable externals indeed remain, a priesthood, and altars, and offices, the skeletons of former grandeur, and titles, the epitaphs of a past existence. But the life and the spirit are gone. Dry bones are all that remain of the faith, such as it was, which animated early missionaries to the western world : intelligence feels the institutes of the Church to be a thralldom which it cannot endure ; and their system of fictions has produced its natural fruit. But these are the regions in which Romish institutions hold, and have long held, undisputed sway : and their religion is

debased to the level of that image-worship which is presented to their eyes. Not that to images alone is to be imputed this disastrous consequence, but that every particular institution is derived from a general principle with which it is consistent, and which is depraved, because it suffers a depraved system in subordination to it. The teaching of the Romish Church is not calculated to rouse, but to cramp and smother the mental energies of the people.

All things were made by God, and are his, and have neither being nor growth except in him: and among other existences that he still holds in his hand, are the faculties of man, intelligence and will, which can be improved and enlarged only under his ordering. And the end, for which he makes men capable of knowledge and affection, is, that they may know his truth and love his goodness. This relation of the creature to the Creator is an essential part and object of creation. He who rules the spheres in

their eccentric motions, might have governed this world without imparting intelligence or will to man, if he had seen fit: but since he has imparted those faculties, and retains to himself the supreme government, whatever part they perform must be under him, and the first purport of their existence must be to know, and participate in his will. The moment ignorance obscures, or perverseness leads astray the understanding from a just sense of the divine attributes, the creature acts in opposition to him who made it and sustains its being, and the harmony of creation is disturbed.

In this lies the great principle of that intercourse between the soul of man and God, which constitutes devotion. The Almighty, by his own will, connects the material world with himself: matter assumes the form, and submits to the motion, which he is please to give it. Mind, different as it is in its own essence, must be connected with him, not by his will only, but by a reciprocal direction of

its own regards. The active free-will of intelligent and moral faculties cannot bear the same relation to him as matter, which is merely passive under his direction. The one is in itself always and in every thing dependent; the other it has pleased the Almighty to leave free. I need not, for my present purpose, determine, how far that freedom is subject to other influences. Suffice it to know, that there is action in mind which there is not in matter. I think and have a will. And in those two faculties lies all that I can give to him who made me. Beings without intelligence or will can give nothing. But this is what I can pay of the vast debt of gratitude, which I owe to the author of my being, and giver of Salvation.

And thus we discover the true nature of devotion—the worship in spirit and truth which God requires. The essence of devotion consists in the communion of the spirit of man with the Spirit of God—in a just acceptation therefore of

the divine attributes, in a belief of the real, and love of the good sovereign of the universe. Prayer to be acceptable must be from the heart; it must be the language of this devotion within, unfettered by degrading or unhallowed thoughts, the ambassador of hope to heaven. The internal principle will be permanent, habitual, and unintermitted, abiding ever in its own place, to regulate action, and supply a never-ceasing flow of high aspirations, and holy desires, and righteous purposes. It seems to be that unflinching devotion which the Apostle enjoins, when he says, "Pray without ceasing:"¹ "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."² Add to these passages our Lord's injunction, not to "use vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking;"³ and the severity with which he rebuked the devotional emblems of the Pharisees, the

¹ 1 Thess. v. 17. ² Ephes. vi. 18. ³ Matt. vi.

broad phylacteries, and enlarged borders of the garments, that had not the soul of piety within ; and the whole seems consistent only with a continuous habit of mental pre-occupation, and not with bodily service, which must be remitted and interrupted. We are delivered from the law, that we "should serve in newness of spirit."¹ "For we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit."²

And to this internal devotion all exterior form is but accessory.³ The service

¹ Rom. vii. 6.

² Phil. iii. 3.

³ A further division has been made of things which belong to devotion—that some are parts of divine worship, and some only circumstances attached to it. In the former, we are to adhere to the revelation of the divine will as our only guide ; and though the laws of man may add the inducement of secular rewards and punishments, yet the commandment must be of God. Of this the observance of the Lord's Day is an instance among ourselves. In the circumstances of divine worship, what is fit and decent may be enjoined by the authority of man, and is to be observed, because we owe conscientious obedience to human authority in things lawful and

of the lip and bended knee, which may be performed at stated intervals in the routine of business, and be forgotten; the majestic cathedral, and the village church; the weekly congregation, and the Sabbath itself; the solemn ordinances, the offices and sacraments; the grave and holy orders of the ministry; the most

indifferent. Not that these circumstances are a part of worship, or that worship would be invalid without them; not that they are of antecedent value in themselves, or that they may never be omitted; but that they are to be observed for the sake of order when and where authority has enjoined their observance. In them there has always been a great diversity of practice; and in the primitive times, almost every church had its different rites and ceremonies, yet maintained unity and communion with its fellows. “*Alii jejunant Sabbato; alii vero non: alii quotidie communicant corpori et sanguini Dominico; alii certis diebus accipiunt; alibi nullus dies intermittitur quò non offeratur; alibi Sabbato tantum et Dominico:*”—“Some fast on the Sabbath; others do not: some daily partake of the Lord’s Supper; others only on fixed days: in some places offerings are made every day; in others only on the Jewish Sabbath or Lord’s Days.”—*AUG. Ep. ad*

sublime hymns, the most touching prayers, the most grateful thanksgiving; all the homage of the sanctuary, and the first table of the commandments, are but exterior and subsidiary signs of that internal devotion of soul, which consists in the knowledge of God, and conformity of our will to his. It is of little import to

Januarium, Ep. 118. And in general, that which is enjoined as a circumstance only, and not as an essential part, of divine worship, can hardly be a sufficient ground of separation; for the principle which requires its observance is that of order, and order would be less violated by refusing to observe a ceremony, than by schism. And therefore in such a matter it is the duty of a Christian to conform to the authorised practice of those with whom it may be his lot to offer his devotions; and a member of our own church, if he is abroad, may freely join in communion with a foreign church not differing in essentials, and conform to their customs, though he may think his own preferable. "If you will neither give offence, nor take offence, conform yourself to all the lawful customs of the churches to which you chance to come," says St. Ambrose to St. Austin. "Nec disciplina ulla est in his melior gravi prudentique Christiano, quam ut eo modo

the Almighty, that men should adore a graven image, or take his name in vain. But it is of the utmost import to his creatures, that they should not confound him with stocks and stones, nor learn to treat their Maker with irreverence.

The internal principles of worship cannot be maintained without external signs.

aget, quo agere viderit ecclesiam ad quamcunque forte devenerit. Quod enim neque contra fidem, neque contra bonos mores injungitur, indifferenter est habendum, et pro eorum inter quos vivitur societate servandum est. Mater mea Mediolanum me consecuta, invenit Ecclesiam Sabbato non jejunantem; ceperit perturbari, et fluctuare quid agerit, cum ego talia non curabam, sed propter ipsam consului de hac re beatissimæ memoriæ virum Ambrosium; respondit se nihil docere me posse nisi quod ipse faceret, quia si melius nosset id potius observaret. . . . Subsecutus est, ut ait mihi, Cum Romæ venio, jejuno Sabbato, cum hic sum non jeuno. Sic etiam tu, ad quam forte Ecclesiam veneris, ejus morem serva si cuiquam nonvis esse scandalo, nec quenquam tibi. Ego vero de hac sententiâ etiam atque etiam cogitans, ita semper habui tanquam eam celesti oraculo susceperim.”—*Aug. ad Jan. Ep. 118.*

The soul draws devotional strength from the devotional acts and language which are prompted by itself; like the rain that descends from the sky, but cannot continually be poured down to refresh the earth, unless new supplies are drawn up from earth to heaven. But "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." They must approach him, not as they would a gilded monument, or the tawdry trappings of earthly splendour—not as they would the greatest of created beings—but with a more just sense of his divine attributes. They must humble themselves under his almighty hand. They must submit themselves to his supreme will. They must love his perfect goodness. They must adore him with all the fervour and devotion of the soul. They must serve him with purity, steadfastness and sincerity of heart. Could their conceptions comprehend his properties—could they assimilate him to any thing—could he be divested of the mysterious and awful,

that confounds and transcends their faculties, he were no longer the Lord.

They are indeed obliged sometimes to speak of him and his actions, as they do of the properties and motions of men's bodies, because they have no other means of expressing, what ought to be made known concerning him. The Scriptures themselves speak of his eyes, ears, face, hands and feet, as if he were like one of us. They say that he is angry, and has regard, and pleasure, and in this very commandment, that he is jealous, as if he were moved with the same passions and affections, as the creatures of his hand. But, alas! my brethren, all this only serves to prove the immeasurable distance between him and us—how incomprehensible he is to our intelligence—how far out of the reach of all we can imagine, or describe, or talk about. God has no hands, or feet, or parts, or passions, such as we have. But our thoughts and speech cannot elevate themselves above our own nature. It is our infirmity, that

we must speak of the Almighty in terms applicable to his material creatures. And that very infirmity, that inability to raise our thoughts higher, and that proneness to fix our affections on sensible objects, is the very foundation of our danger in making a graven image to represent God.

“For the Lord thy God is a jealous God :” jealous, not for himself, but for his spouse the Church : lest our conceptions of his attributes should be debased : lest our conceptions of the duties we owe him, should be depraved : lest our minds should be clouded with superstitious horrors ; and we should fall into the wretchedness and despair of those who know not the Lord. Except in his love to the creatures of his hand, it is of little import to him, how we serve him, or whom we serve. Of what avail to the Most High is the worship of this worm of earth ? What matters it to the Almighty, whether we spread out our impotent arms to the Eternal Spirit, or to a clod of his lumpish matter ! What honour can the

everlasting God derive from the existences that hang upon his breath—what gratification, except the gratification of his mercy and goodness, in seeing them saved! Our follies can little injure him; but our devotions will not elevate the soul, unless they are offered to higher beings than ourselves: our prayers will not purify an affection, or soften the hard heart, unless they are addressed to purity and love: the spirit of man will not obtain communion with the spirit of God by bending his knee to the work of men's hands. And debased notions of the divine being and attributes will degrade us, and our children, and our children's children. The superstitions and prejudices of the father descend to the third and fourth generation of them that hate God. They are handed on from parent to child. They are imbibed in the very cradle, and with the first nourishment of infancy cherished in a mother's bosom. And ages pass away, before one has penetration to discover, and courage to shake off the delusions and depravity of his sires.

Thus God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children. But he will shew mercy unto thousands in them that love him, and keep his commandments. To have, or to prompt base conceptions of the Almighty, is here compared to hatred of him : to conceive, or to propose worthy notions of his attributes, is to love him. Man made after the image of God, pursues the pleasures of the world, and sighs for mortal loveliness : what is perishable gains full possession of his heart : what will disappoint his hopes, or elude his grasp, or pall upon his sated appetite, or disgust him wearied with enjoyment, or wither, and decay, and die in his very hand, yet absorbs all his regards, and engages every energy of his life. And this too often is, because he does not really know any thing better, or more worthy to be loved. He has not a conception of the beauty of holiness. He has never formed an idea of the divine goodness. He has no object of pursuit or imitation in heaven. He has never turned a thought to the nature of God. If he

could understand, that God is all goodness, and truth, and beauty, as sure as he had a heart, he would set his affections on things above. If he could comprehend and believe the eternal salvation of the justified in Christ, he would pursue and seek the happiness of the world to come, and no longer languish under the bounties, or repine under the disappointments, with which it pleased Providence to visit him in this life.

What then must be our blindness, our madness, if we strive to debase yet more our own conceptions of God, or the conceptions of our fellow-Christians, by setting up degrading representations of him !

The great object of life should be to exalt and enlarge our comprehension of the divine properties and attributes. This is the end, for which our highest faculties, intelligence and will, were given : and in proportion as we attain it, the ties that hold society together will be strengthened under its influence, civil institutions will be based upon the will and partake of

the spirit of the true God, to whom worship is addressed, and the social compact in effect become a continuous devotion, or conformity to the will of God. Look to the inhuman rites of more revolting superstitions, and by their side you find a debased and perverted sense of truth and falsehood, laws that are appalling, and crimes sanctioned that make you shudder. Men inured by sight, and hearing, and practice, to the degrading ordinances of the darker superstitions, lose their sense of truth in morals and religion together.

Some indeed, though they do not carve the wood or grave the stone, yet set up an idol in their imaginations, and describe him in their talk, so prone are they to fall from just conceptions of the deity. They represent Divine Providence as a creature like themselves, short-sighted as they are, with purposes, and means, and interests like their own. Under this image they seem to commune with the Divine Being in all that concerns them-

selves. Under this image they accuse Providence of being unjust to them. Under this image they dispute the wisdom of God. Under this image they pretend to penetrate the divine purposes, and to interpose as councillors of the deity. And each begins to think, that the divine resolves should be conformed to his peculiar interests; and complains, and revolts, if they are not. Thus he estranges himself from his Heavenly Father. Thus he loses all sense of God's goodness, and omnipotence, and wisdom. Thus he finally wanders over the earth, without being conscious of any eye to watch, or any hand to protect him, as if he were an irresponsible tenant of a ruin that had no proprietor, himself an orphan in a neglected and fatherless world.

It is vain to deny, that such is the frame of mind of too many among us, who have had least opportunity of forming just notions, or been most exposed to the influence of debasing and corrupt ideas of God. Nominally Christians,

they are really heathens and idolaters. They are blinded by heathen delusions. They are affected by heathen corruption. They are liable to heathen wretchedness and despair. Like heathens they are wholly occupied with the cares of this life, having no certain hope of another. And it is but by a borrowed light from other and very different members of Christ's Church, that they are saved from heathen superstition, and utter darkness.

To guard those who have once known the Lord, from relapse into such ignorance and misery, is the object of the second commandment. As such, and not as an empty form, or idle repetition, inapplicable to our age, let us, my brethren, accept and observe it. The Jews to whom it was first given, were in the midst of dangers and temptations from the idolatries that encompassed them. We too are in the midst of danger from the all-absorbing keenness of worldly studies and pursuits. They were a gross and sensual people, eager to attach themselves to objects of

sensible regard. Look around! are not many of us the same? and does not Mammon present us the idols, that Moloch or Remphan did to them? We then have need of the command, as well as they. And may God's grace be with us, to enable us to keep it, to acquaint ourselves with him, to love him, to walk with him through life, to be in him, and he in us both here and for ever.

SERMON IV.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

Exodus, xx. 5.

Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain.

To understand the full purport of the commandments, we must ever bear in mind, that their practical object is, the well-doing of man. They are all given in mercy. The first forbids more gods than one, that we may have but one uniform will to obey. The second forbids us to represent God by an image, that our conceptions of him should not be debased and depraved. The third forbids us to take His name in vain, that we may not fall into familiar irreverence,

or reckless profanity. The fourth ordains stated intervals of religious leisure, that the knowledge of God may be kept alive and fresh in men's minds.

The object of the third then is, to secure to God, and every thing that belongs to him, the reverence due from the creatures of his hand. It is that which we pray for in the Lord's prayer: "Hallowed be thy name." It is that which the Psalmist emphatically asserts: "God is greatly to be feared in the Assembly of the Saints; and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him."¹ It is, that we should never mention him, or any thing that relates to him, without the religious respect due to holy things. It is, that in every transaction of life we should exhibit a devout acknowledgment of his greatness: "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."²

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

¹ Psalm lxxxix.

² 1 Cor. x. 31.

The word name here signifies, not only God himself, but whatever belongs, or has immediate relation to him,—his word, his sacraments, his house, his priesthood, his service. The Israelites revered the unutterable title of Jehovah, so that they dare not mention that “glorious and fearful name,” as it was termed, “the Lord thy God.”¹ And it is irreverence to him to profane any thing that is his. We may not speak lightly of his word; for “Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed.”² We may not receive his sacraments with levity; for this was the sin of the Corinthians, at the holy communion every one to take before other his own supper, and one was hungry, and another drunken; and “they eat and drank damnation to themselves, not discerning the Lord’s body.”³ We may not profane his house; for Jesus cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and “said, It is written, my house shall be called the house of prayer.”⁴

¹ Deut. xxviii. 58.

² Prov. xiii. 13.

³ 1 Cor. xi. 29.

⁴ Matt. xxi. 13.

We may not revile the priesthood ; for Paul excused himself, "I wist not, brethren, that he was the high-priest, for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."¹ We may not deal lightly with his service ; neither trusting to externals ; for "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me :"² nor babbling and prating ; "when ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do ; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking :"³ nor praying for such things as we ought not to desire ; "ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."⁴ Churches, and ministers, and solemn ordinances, and stated devotions, are dedicated to God, that they may, under his grace, maintain and keep alive the reverence of the people for him. Hence we consecrate those stately edifices, which are the chief orna-

¹ Acts, xxiii. 5.

² Psalm lxvi. 18.

³ Matt. vi. 7.

⁴ James, iv. 3.

ment of our city. Hence we adorn his temple with vaulted roofs, and clustering columns, and massive pillars, as if emblems of the stability of our faith, and the tower, and pointed spire, that seems to elevate and direct our thoughts to heaven. For the sake of God, to whose service they are set apart, we shew respect to these his creatures. And to use them as other things are used, and much more to make them in their sacred purposes the subject of jest, or ridicule, is not only to defeat the object for which they have been instituted, but also to set the example of irreverence for him to whom they peculiarly belong.

But the most obvious method of breaking the third commandment is by common swearing, cursing, and blasphemy.

Nothing can conduce more directly to destroy, in a man's own mind, and in that of his hearers, the reverence due to the Almighty, than the habitual introduction of what is most sacred, into discourse that is thoughtless, if not profane. It is not

uncommon to find levity and trifles mingled with the most fearful oaths: the holy name of God fills up every vacant interval of idle conversation: He is invoked to witness vices, and follies, and drunken brawls, and profligate excesses: He is called upon to guarantee assertions, and denials, and vows, with all the flippancy of impious asseveration. And the man who has thus sworn without a thought, never stops to inquire if he is perjured. And he who has thus vowed, never dreams of the guilt of Herod, who, for his oath's sake, and them that sat at meat with him, called for the head of John the Baptist. And he who is thus flippant and profane with all that should be revered and worshipped, never heeds the warning, that at the last tremendous day, the God of whom he babbles so irreverently, will judge him for every idle word.

Some indeed by a sort of refinement contrive to avoid mention of the name of God, and to swear only by the creatures

of his hand. This is but to alter the complexion of the sin, and not the sin itself. It is to attribute to the creature that which belongs only to the Creator; the power to discern the sincerity with which we swear; the power to determine its truth and to inflict the penalty of falsehood. It has been well said, that an honest man's word is as good as his oath: and, if we cannot obtain credit for the one, there is little hope of doing so by the common and profane use of the other. And so our Lord himself enjoins: "Swear not at all: neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head; because thou canst not make one hair white or black: But let your communication" (your ordinary discourse that is) "be yea, yea; nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."¹

¹ Matt. v. 34.

Akin to common swearing is the cursing which generally accompanies it. Men are found, who consign others to the most frightful judgments, upon the slightest provocation, or upon none at all. Or they invoke the most fearful penalties on themselves, as if there were no such judgments and penalties in reality. Thus God, and his laws, and the awful sanctions of them grow into familiarity and contempt. All serious regard of them is eradicated from the mind. And the saying of the Psalmist is again fulfilled: "His delight was in cursing, and it shall happen unto him: he loved not blessing, therefore it shall be far from him."¹

A third form of the same irreverence consists in idle, reproachful, and contemptuous expressions applied to the nature, attributes, or commands of God. The flippant in his thoughtless humour jests upon subjects of eternal moment. The scoffer ridicules, or misrepresents, or in-

¹ Psalm cix. 17.

veighs against the holiest articles of faith. The scurrilous thrusts himself into the very sanctuary, to advance charges against ministers and people, against worship and discipline, against ordinances divine and human. The stolen taunts of unblushing impiety frighten the weak, or ensnare the ignorant and unwary. Assurance, and ingenuity, the wanton affirmation, the biting sarcasm, the impertinent lampoon, the frivolous jest, or indecent merriment, strike at the best, sometimes, alas! the only refuge and consolation amid the distresses and afflictions of the world. The poor and humble, whom such men often affect to pity, are robbed of their only inheritance, their hope beyond the grave: an inheritance they more need than the rich and prosperous, who have other comforts to render life delightful. The young and inexperienced above all, impatient of ridicule, and dazzled by novelty, are obnoxious to the snare: and pretended talent, or sparkling presumption, lures into its toils the generous and single-

hearted, whose caution has not been schooled by adversity, or discernment quickened by opposition. How many a one, to whose nurture in the Lord a father has devoted all his care; on whose gradually developed graces and acquirements rested the fondest hopes of parents, brethren, and acquaintance;—nay! to whose maturer excellence instructors looked for credit, and even a whole nation for counsel and defence—how many a one of such promise has been seduced by the mock pretensions of impious ribaldry, to blight the cherished expectations of a favouring people; to convert the esteem of good men into disgust, their support into censure, disregard, or hostility; to become his own, and his country's worst enemy, instead of their most trusty friend; to array himself against every Christian principle, and every religious service that men can offer to that Supreme Being, of whom he is become the insulting foe. Yet what cares the scoffer for the parent's disappointment? for the degradation of

the son? for the father's curse? or for the child's despair? The wretched victim rails perhaps at what he terms an old man's prejudice or credulity; and he who has been chief priest at the demon's sacrifice, revels in the ruin he has wrought, and is gladdened by the misery he has inflicted.

It may be said perhaps, that in these modes of breaking the third commandment, there is often more of thoughtlessness, than of deliberation,—more of idle levity, than of wilful depravity. But in this matter, it is that very thoughtlessness, which constitutes the sin: it is levity in using the name of God, or speaking of what belongs to him, which in itself becomes depravity: it is that very careless irreverence, which the commandment is designed to correct. “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet,” said the Lord to Moses, “for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” And if we presume to approach God with familiarity, to talk of Him without fear, and indifferently mingle what

belongs to Him, with what belongs to Mammon, or to the author of evil himself, we must expect for ourselves and those influenced by us, nothing better than the penalty, of which the Israelites were warned when the Lord descended upon Sinai: "Charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish."¹

The glory of God, and the edification of our fellow-creatures, are the two purposes, for which we may introduce, seriously and devoutly, the divine name, and titles, and attributes, into our discourse. Where neither of the former are concerned, the latter can hardly find a becoming place: yet those who use the latter with most familiarity, are the very men who seem most lightly to regard the former; and it is not from excess of zeal in the cause of the Almighty, but from irreverence and reckless profanity, that what is most sacred is invoked on every

¹ Exodus, xix. 21.

trivial occasion, and intermingled with every idle pursuit. Thus in another aspect we discern the true character of profane swearing, and the true intent of the commandment directed against it. The habit is inconsistent with a religious frame of mind, and to be addicted to it indicates a disposition little influenced by the love of God or the concerns of futurity. In matters on which a deep interest has been excited, in that which is the object of earnest aspiration, or to attain which earnest efforts have been made, levity of speech in others is offensive, and levity of thought in a man's self is revolting. So that to him who has ever reflected upon the import of a future existence, to him, in short, who has any sense of religion at all, there would seem to be no temptation to offend against the third commandment: and in this consists one aggravation of the offence, that almost without inducement, without the plea of antecedent propensity, or the motive of future gain, for mere frivolity, or bravade, or

humour, a man will destroy all reverence of God in his own heart, and do as much as in him lies to root it out of the heart of his fellow-creatures.

But it is time that we should turn to the darker, because more deliberate offences against the third commandment. These derive their aggravated guilt from wilful falsehood. Falsehood is always an offence against God, as well as man: "lying lips are an abomination to the Lord." But there are many circumstances, under which an untruth seems to be made offensive, and insulting (so to speak) peculiarly to the Almighty. In that which relates to Him, or concerns his holy religion; in that which he is solemnly invoked to witness; in that on which depends the spiritual welfare of our neighbour; and in other similar circumstances, falsehood seems peculiarly a falsehood to God. Yet such are the fearful inroads of habitual vice upon all religious principle, that no sooner does a man become false to his

fellow-men, than he becomes false to the Almighty also. He says what is not true, and swears to it with equal readiness; and obtains the practice of a double profanation, the making an untruth, and mixing up with it the first and great truth, God himself.

Of all the crimes which corrupted man has introduced into the world since the fall of Adam, none seems more directly in defiance of the Majesty of Heaven, than wilful and deliberate perjury. To take a solemn oath, is to declare, that we remember ourselves to be in the presence of God; that we appeal to Him to witness our sincerity; that we renounce all title to his mercy, if we do not express the truth of our hearts. "So help me God!" This it is solemnly to swear. And thus to swear wilfully to what is false, is to brave the Almighty to his face: it is to bid him come, and witness our contempt of his will, and our derision of his commandments: it is to call on him to notice

the falsehood we utter, and to dare him to do his worst to punish it, or to leave us unprotected in the world.

In other sins men endeavour to forget God. They try to escape him; or at least to persuade themselves, that he will not see, or take account; or that the sin is not an offence, as some would make it, against him; or that it is palliated by better affections, to which it does a sort of violence. Depravity in general is masked and disguised by some delusion. But in perjury there is no such pretence of self-deceit. The thought of God cannot be put aside, for he is solemnly invoked. There is no attempt to escape him, no shrinking from his notice, no tenderness of a trembling conscience concealing from him the deed a hand commits. The Almighty is challenged to come, to see, and to avenge the crime. He is called upon to be the witness of it, that it may be done in his presence, and that his holy name may be mixed up with, and sanction falsehood, if he does not vin-

dicare the truth. And the false swearer must look for nothing, but the denunciation of the prophet: "Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant; thus saith the Lord: As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, I will recompense it upon his head."¹

And the injury to man is not less than the insult to God. The dearest ties of social connexion, the safety of property, of character, of life itself, all depend, more or less, upon the sanctity and fidelity of an oath. All security of good government, all mutual confidence in commerce, nay! in every relation and condition of life, comes to an end, if oaths are disregarded. No man can guard his fair fame from dishonour, if false witnesses may rise up against him, and lay to his charge things that he knows not. No man can protect his possessions, or his life, if sons of Belial may accuse him, like Naboth,

¹ Ezek. xviii. 18, 19.

who was cast out of the city and stoned ; and Jezebel seized upon his vineyard. No man could confide in his own hearth and home ;—no man could cherish the dear relations even of a parent to his child, if vows solemnly registered in the sight of God were to lose their sacred import and obligation. Thus it is, that Satan, the destroyer of men's happiness, is "the father of lies." By falsehood he led astray the woman at the beginning : "Thou shalt not surely die." And when the wicked congratulates himself, that with oaths and artifices he has beguiled a neighbour : when he smiles at his own cunning, and plumes himself on the adroitness of his falsehood, and the shamelessness of his irreverence, what is it, but that Satan hath filled the heart with his own malignity, and revels in the accursed pleasure of having made a man the counterpart of himself ?

Once more, in the worship of feigned lips the name of God is deliberately taken in vain, and the commandment wilfully

broken. When we enter his sanctuary with the pretended purpose of devotion, but really for amusement and flippant intercourse with fellows; when we kneel, as if in prayer to heaven, but really some earthly object is the idol of our attachment; when we utter the supplication for grace, but really Mammon is the sole end of our aspirations; when in the holy Sacraments we promise that we will believe and obey, without any purpose of faith or obedience; when we profess to bewail sins, that the remembrance of them is grievous, and the burden intolerable, without any contrition or repentance; when we offer and present ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice to God, without any intent of yielding either flesh or spirit to his service; is not this to mock him at his own shrine, and offer insult at the throne of his presence?—is it not as if to tell him, that he cannot read the heart, and is no more than a mere man, who must judge by the appearance only, and

be betrayed by professions, the hollowness of which he is not able to discern? “I will pay unto thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble,” said holy David.¹ But how often do we promise to serve him, when his hand presses hard upon us; and forget all our protestations the moment we are relieved: or make vows we are in no condition to fulfil, and forget that godliness is not the act of a single volition, but of a long and trying course of self-denial and control: or, like Jephthah, devote that which it is neither lawful for us to give, nor fit for God to accept: or utter votive declamation of the lip and tongue, in which the heart never holds a share, and it passes away lighter than the air that wafts the sounds to heaven. And is not this to take the name of God in vain?—to make light of him, and treat him, because it treats his service, with contempt: “Better

¹ Psalm lxvi. 13.

it is that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay." "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."¹

In that also on which depends the spiritual welfare of others, we profane the sacred name of God, if we belie the truth. This may be done wilfully, or ignorantly, or under compulsion, or accidentally. That something may be yielded to circumstances seems to be inferred from the permission granted to Naaman, that he should bow down himself in the house of Rimmon;² but every exhortation to steadfastness of faith, every admonition to make our light shine before men, every blessing promised to those who suffer for Christ's name's sake, all the honour of the martyr on the one hand, and all the shame of Peter's denial of his Lord on the

¹ Eccles. v. 5, 2.

² 2 Kings, v. 18.

other, combine to assure us, that he who shall undaunted profess the truth on earth, shall receive his reward in heaven, and he who shall deny God before men, shall be denied of God before the hosts assembled at the judgment of eternity. And in that denial of the truth which is wilful, and for the purpose only of leading others astray, the offence against the Majesty of the Almighty is palpable, the mockery of that which belongs to him is aggravated in guilt by the malignancy which withdraws his creatures from his service, and would make them infidels in spite of all the conviction necessary for faith.

Finally, the end of Ananias and Sapphira teaches how falsehood without an oath may be combined with irreverence, and so peculiarly falsehood against God. "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." Here had been no open adjuration, no solemn invocation openly pronounced: "So help me God!" Yet it was a matter,

in which the Almighty was immediately concerned. It was in his immediate service,—in a matter of religion,—in the ministrations of his holy church, that the treachery was planned, the falsehood agreed upon and executed. And the husband and the wife were alike visited with the divine wrath, and fell down, and gave up the ghost.

My brethren, let us take warning from them in all that pertains to holy things. Let us take care not to appear before God, with a lie upon the lip, or deceit in the heart, professing to serve him, when we really care only to keep up worldly appearance, and maintain a decent aspect among our neighbours. Above all, when we come to the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, let not our hearts be with the world, while we solemnly profess Communion with Christ. Let us not betray his Church, while we profess our fellowship with it. Let us not wound him anew, while we make a show of gratitude for his sacrifice. Let us not retain

an enmity in our breast, when we come to the feast of love. Let us not have it said of us, as of Judas: "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me."

SERMON V.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS, xx. 6.

Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day.

THE Sabbath, or Day of Rest, has been appointed, to keep alive and fresh in men's minds the knowledge of the true God.

This appears from the history of its institution. No sooner was the creation of the world completed, than the Lord God blessed the seventh day, on which he rested, and sanctified it,¹ that mankind might be engaged solemnly to acknowledge, and worship him as the Creator. Though not again mentioned

¹ Gen. ii. 2.

till the time of Moses, it doubtless was kept holy, so long as a sense of true religion remained; as after Moses, the history of the next 500 years is equally silent on its observance, though the command had been so strict, and so often repeated, to observe it.

In the days of Moses, the Sabbath, like all other service of the true God, had been neglected, and lost. As the period of men's existence became more distant from the creation, sin confirmed its hold, and multiplied its ramifications; the true worship was corrupted; and idolatry prevailed in almost all the world. With the worship, the day of worship also was forgotten. It may have been revived after the flood, and continued partially with Abraham and his family. But in the Egyptian bondage of the Israelites it was again utterly abolished. Hence the command given to Moses for its renewal. Hence the new commandment was required, more precise and stringent, to guard the people, if it were possible, from

that retrograde debasement and forgetfulness of God, into which their forefathers had fallen. In like manner, the worship of the true God was again enjoined, though Adam, and Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, had worshipped him long before. In like manner murder was again forbidden, though it had been solemnly denounced after the flood, and the curse upon Cain, the first murderer, had been greater than he was able to bear.

Thus then the Sabbath was again appointed with the same object as before; to remind them of that great fundamental article of all religion, that all things are of, and sustained, and governed by the one true God. "Thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath Day: for, in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it." God rested on the seventh day from his work of Creation; and therefore the children of Israel were to rest from all work. Not

indeed that God was fatigued and tired as a man is: "The Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary:"¹ but that "it might be a sign between the Lord, and the children of Israel for ever."²

Again, God declared himself to the children of Israel, by the title of, "the Lord, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage:" and this signal mercy of their deliverance from slavery was to the Israelites a distinctive mark of the true God. Therefore, when they had passed the Red Sea, and the host of Pharaoh was overthrown, and manna was given them in the wilderness of Sin, before they came to Sinai, or received the commandments, the Sabbath is spoken of, as what had been known before, but lost, and now re-ordained: "This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath to the Lord:"³ and the

¹ Isaiah, xl. 28. ² Ex. xxxi. 13, 17. ³ Ex. xvi. 23.

manna given for five days would *not* keep till the morrow ; but that given on the sixth day did keep, and they gathered twice as much, and it did not stink, neither was any worm therein, that the seventh day might be a day of rest, a Sabbath to the Lord, in memory of the deliverance he had wrought for them. "Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord brought thee out thence : therefore he commanded thee to keep the Sabbath Day."¹ He commanded them to keep it as an apt memorial of the rest he had bestowed, after the hard toils and afflictions of that slavery without a Sabbath, from which he had brought them forth.²

The Jewish Sabbath, whether or not the day on which the Creation was completed, was that on which their deliverance from Egyptian slavery was fully accom-

¹ Deut. v. 15

² See Paley's "Moral Philosophy," book v. c. 7. for a different view of the institution of the Sabbath, and the arguments by which it may be supported.

plished by the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea. That bondage of the Israelites, and their liberation, is the type of our bondage to, and redemption from, sin and death. In common with the Jews then, we keep a seventh day of rest in remembrance of the Creator, not pretending to determine on what day of the present week the Creation was completed, or which was the first, or which the sixth of the existence of the world. But as they keep the day on which their deliverance was completed, so we keep that on which our Redemption was fully accomplished by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. St. Paul speaks of the Jewish Sabbaths, as a shadow of things to come; and therefore to cease with the body, or reality, which is Christ.¹ Hence on the first day of the week the disciples came together to break bread (to receive the Lord's Supper, that is,) and "Paul preached to them."²

¹ Coloss. ii. 16.

² Acts, xv. 7.

Hence St. Paul recommended the first day of the week especially for acts of charity, concerning the collection for the Saints.¹ Hence it is by St. John called "The Lord's Day."² Hence the whole Christian Church from the age of the Apostles has observed it: and, though for many hundred years it does not appear to have been called the Sabbath, it was a day of rest from the common business of life, and devoted to the worship of God, and study of his word.³

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 1.

² Rev. i. 10.

³ Of the duties enjoined by the commandments, a division is sometimes made into those of moral, and those of positive obligation; the former class consisting of such as appear to have an intrinsic antecedent virtue in themselves, as charity, honesty, or reverence for God; the latter of such as are to be observed, not for any seeming value of their own, but only because they are commanded by the Almighty. Of these last few instances occur in either table: but in the fourth commandment the positive obligation is united with the moral, though plainly distinct from it. That a convenient portion of our time is due to the worship and immediate

In the Jewish ritual there was a peculiar sacrifice for the Sabbath:¹ there was a peculiar Psalm, the xcii. appointed for it: it was the day of holy convocations:² it was the day, on which in earlier times men resorted to the prophets for instruc-

service of God who made us, seems to be one of those eternal principles of right, which a little reflection must induce every man's reason to acknowledge, when proposed to him: but that the precise portion of time to be devoted should be every seventh day, seems to depend, not so much upon any inherent aptitude of that division of time, as upon the mere commandment of the Creator. And, perhaps, the word "Remember" is therefore prefixed to this commandment, because the special day to be observed could not be suggested by natural reason, but was defined by the dictate of revelation. We can readily discover the advantage of divine authority to determine the season of rest and general devotion; and God has vouchsafed to intimate, why he appointed the seventh day in preference to any other at the beginning, and the incidental occurrences of it render it the most fit day to be observed: but this aptitude is altogether independent of any intrinsic antecedent quality in the day itself, that reason should discover virtue in observing it.

¹ Numb. xxviii. 9, 10.

² Levit. xxiii. 3.

tion :¹ and in later times the law was read and preached in the synagogues every Sabbath Day.² This indicates the duties of the day of rest to the Christian ; that it is to be a religious rest. On the Sabbath, Paul and the disciples went out of Philippi by a river's side, where prayer was wont to be made : and they sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.³ And so it is the day on which we should attend the house of prayer, and public service of God. It is the day on which we should hear his word preached, and seek the counsel of the minister of religion. It is the day on which we should receive the holy communion of the Lord's Supper. It is the day on which all our reading, our meditations, and pursuits, should be in harmony with our formal devotions, and the service of the sanctuary. "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath Day," saith our Lord : and works of charity, and what will

¹ 2 Kings, iv. 23. ² Acts, xv. 21. ³ Acts, xvi. 13.

improve our own piety, and that of others, are allowed on the day of rest. Nay! works of necessity, that cannot well be deferred, are permitted to us: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." But the pursuit of gain, diversions, and entertainments, that are inconsistent with religious exercises, and a devout frame of mind; the feasts of dissipation, the excitements of reckless intemperance, the wantonness of profane and flippant conversation, the all-absorbing speculations of trade, or anxieties of ambition; in a word, all the immediate service of that Mammon who is opposed to God, must be a cessation and abolition of the remembrance of God, and therefore, from its own nature, in direct conflict with the object, and prohibited by the institution of the Lord's Day.

Another duty this commandment especially enjoins, as being especially connected with its object. It is not enough that you should do no manner of work

yourself alone : it is not enough that you should hallow the day of rest, and resort to your place of prayer and holy meditation yourself only : "Thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, thy cattle, and the stranger that is within thy gates." The children's devout remembrance of God depends much upon their parents. The devoutness of the dependent is much under the influence of his master's example. The religion of the stranger, and the heathen that resort to you, may be based and built up upon your open profession of earnest faith, and sincere obedience to God. Hence the religious responsibility of station, wealth, and parental authority. The father has to answer, not only for maintaining a lively sense of God and the divine goodness in his own mind, but also for planting and nourishing it in that of his children. The master of a family has to answer, not only for making the Sabbath a day of rest to himself, but for

providing that it shall be so to his servants also—that unnecessary labour shall not then be required of them—that they shall not, as on other days, be engaged with equipage which is needed only for display, or entertainments made only to exhibit splendour:— but that they, as well as himself, shall have a fixed interval of worldly occupation, to devote to the worship of God, and the study of his Word. Every Christian inhabiting a Christian country is responsible for making his light shine before men, by the means God has himself ordained;—by joining his brother Christians in open profession of faith, and public worship of God, on that day of holy rest, which God has appointed for that very purpose,—to be a sign between him and his people, and to keep up a knowledge and remembrance of him throughout all the days of our lives. Consider, my brethren, that the very object of this commandment is to keep alive the remembrance of God in the

minds of men. Consider, that those who have least knowledge of God, and are least careful to obey him, are the very beings who have most need of this commandment's application. Consider from what mercies you exclude them, if, in miserable selfishness, you take care only to preserve the memory of God in your own minds, and grant no opportunity of its obtaining a place in theirs. Consider that this will not be to obey the command, but to thwart and counteract it. To observe the day of rest, and attend public worship yourselves, and so to employ your family or domestics, as that they cannot do the same, is, as it were, to set forth the memorial of the Almighty, and at the same time to shut it up and hide it—to renew the remembrance of him by keeping a Sabbath holy, and to blot out the remembrance of him, by not suffering others to do the same—to blow hot and cold with the same breath—to do something to fill the kingdom of God, at the very

moment that you are doing much to withdraw its servants, and keep it empty of faithful subjects.

As it is, there are too many, who slight, or omit the services of devotion. But if it were left to every man to worship God at any time, when he willed, and only when he willed, many more would find pretence to defer and postpone the duty, until they altogether neglected it. If, again, it were left to every man to worship God in private only, those who did discharge the duty, would be doing nothing thereby to maintain a recollection of him among those who did not. And so, even if a few Christians did preserve their faith inviolate, the bulk of the population, the mass of mankind, prone as all are to regard what is present to the senses, and forget what is absent, must inevitably sink into the grossest darkness and ignorance of God. They would be acquainted with no religious profession; their memory would be enlivened by no recurrent services of

heaven; their hard hearts would be subdued by no holy influence of prayer; their souls would be touched with no affection, but unmitigated and debasing worldliness.

So necessary to a general existence of religion is the public worship of God. But there can be no public worship without a determined and stated season, which the public shall by common consent devote to the purposes of devotion. Men cannot meet together in congregations without a day and an hour appointed for meeting. And that day, and that hour cannot be a day or an hour of religion to mankind, unless the ordinary pursuits of life are broken in upon, and leisure given for exercises of devotion and piety. Nay! a man cannot turn so readily from the service of Mammon to that of God. It is not enough to have an *hour* of prayer. The ledger or the rent-roll of a morning will leave little disposition for the prayer-book and Bible at noon. The whole day is often

found inadequate to the task of shaking off the thoughts of the day before : and the pillow of the Sabbath morning, and the hassock of the Sabbath devotions, is haunted by the images of worldly interests and pursuits, that yesterday occupied the heart and meditations. So hard is it to take off our thoughts from the things of sense that are before us, and fix them on the things of faith that are in another world.

Yet, if any thing could withdraw us from the cares and pursuits of present life, the stillness and repose of a well-observed Sabbath, the general cessation from labour, and the solemn services of the sanctuary, would seem calculated to engage and wrap up our whole souls in the concerns and aspirations of a life to come. When the Word of God is read and preached by the minister ordained to that very service, as an ambassador of Christ—when the united breath of a whole Christian congregation, in one common prayer, confesses their common sins,

and asks forgiveness through one common Mediator—when, in the presence of God, worldly distinctions disappear, and men stand humbled beneath their fellows, or superior to them, only as they are good or bad in the sight of God—when, in the Communion of Saints, the prince is joined in fellowship with the beggar,—nay! may learn to value his relation to a poor but earnest Christian, higher than any earthly privilege—when, in the ministration of heavenly gifts and graces, high and low, rich and poor, powerful and powerless, are confounded together, each has an immortal soul, and to save souls is the great work, it matters not the souls of whom—when these marks of earth, and symbols of earthly difference, are set aside, it must be a worldly heart indeed, that is callous to holy incentives, and deaf to devout appeals—that will still obtrude Mammon upon the worship of God (as if he could serve two masters)—that will still be puffed up with pride, or irritable with passion, or

unrelenting in hard heart—that will still be covetous of what belongs to other men, or miserly, and uncharitable in what belongs to himself, while he stands in the presence of the Most High, to plead, in common with those whom he despises, or injures, or will not pity, for the mercies of a life to come, and the bliss of everlasting salvation.

The Gospel is not indeed a rigorous observance of fasts and ceremonies; not the pompous deckings of a sacrifice; not the knee-service and forms of heartless worship. But it is a sincere devotion of the soul to God: it is relieving the distressed, succouring the helpless, comforting the afflicted, doing good to all, and raising their hopes to a better country, where the righteous may look for the bliss, which this world cannot afford its most successful votaries. And it is to cherish such a temper, and to sustain in the discharge of such duties, that God has given a day of rest and ordinances to be observed. It is not enough inwardly

to believe and love him. We must confess him with the lips, or the heart will soon be silent also: we must teach him to others, or we shall soon forget him ourselves. The Sabbath was ordained of the Almighty for the good of his creatures; to preserve the truth among them; to keep the soul elevated above the things of sense; to rekindle the expiring embers of a too cold affection. It is by the recurrence of sacred duties on every seventh day, to keep alive a knowledge, and keep fresh a remembrance of the Supreme. It is the memorial continually presented of the creation, which was completed on the seventh day. It is the oblation in continual gratitude for the Redemption, for Christ rose from the dead on this day. It is to prevent Christians from doing what the Israelites did, and all the world had done before them,—forsaking the true God to set up devils, or inventions of their own imagination in his place. The Almighty knows how prone men are to fall from what is true,

and has fenced his servants about with ordinances, not to debar them from any enjoyment, but to secure to them the blessings they possess. He knows into what debasement and wretchedness they fall, who lose their remembrance of him ; and has set apart a day of rest, to be also a day of prayer and holy meditation, and public service of religion, and open avowal of faith ; duties of commemoration and mutual edification ; from which no rank is exempt, for the influence of the great can best keep alive the knowledge of God ; and no meanness of condition can exclude, for all must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.

Mercy, indeed, is better than sacrifice. When an act of charity, to heal a sinking frame, or save a soul to Christ, breaks in upon the sacred rest of the Lord's Day, if the work is such as cannot be postponed, it may be done without offence. It will not defeat, but rather coincide with, and promote the end and object of the Commandment. If one of you, my brethren,

has a neighbour confined by disease, helpless and unfriended; you do well to tend the bed of sickness, to prepare the remedies prescribed, to visit the mourner, and soothe the sorrow of the afflicted on the Lord's Day, whom you cannot tend, visit, and soothe on any other day. You do well to make a journey on the Sabbath to the couch of him who is on the confines of another world, that you may, in holy communion with his spirit and the saints in heaven, draw him nearer to God, before whom he will soon appear—that he may be reconciled to his offended Lord, and his pardon sealed, before he go hence and be no more seen. It is possible this may cost you some toil. It is also possible that the work cannot safely be postponed. If so, it is a work acceptable to God, though it breaks the letter of the command. It is lawful to heal on the Sabbath Day.¹

But, though necessary business may be

¹ Matt. xii.; Luke, xiv. 3.

prosecuted—though mercy, charity, and justice, are duties that supersede a rite or ceremony incompatible with their exercise, yet the Christian will seldom feel satisfied with himself, if he neglects his part in observances, that are of such import to himself and his fellow-men. That duty must be of instant exigence indeed, which will justify the desecration of a whole Sabbath. And the thoughts turn to earthly, so much more readily, than to heavenly cares: what is present, so much more forcibly affects us, through the senses, than what is future, and in expectation only: we so readily find reasons for doing what we desire, and so frequently desire the pleasures, or gains, or follies of the world, rather than the rewards of futurity: that the man who is sincere, will suspect his own integrity, when he gives judgment in favour of breaking a written commandment. He will act with a boding heart, and decide with a troubled spirit, if it is in any way against God's word. He will inquire

anxiously, Could not this business be put off till to-morrow? might not this Sabbath-breaking have been prevented by a little foresight of yesterday? may I not yet keep sacred the hours of divine service at least? and join for awhile with my Christian brethren in those prayers and praises, which should be the chief business of the day? may I not thus, in part at least, help to keep alive the remembrance of my supreme Master, and discharge a portion of that duty, which it is of such import to myself and my fellow-creatures that I should fulfil?

When our Lord would "have mercy, and not sacrifice," it is added, "And a knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." Though we now reject as unprofitable the mere external rites of the Mosaic law, the dress, the sacrifice of beasts, the burning of incense, and the shewbread for the priests; yet we may not think lightly of the knowledge of God, or despise the study of his will. To the bulk of mankind the Sabbath

supplies the only leisure for learning his holy ways. Worldly occupations and toils engage them on other days. And let them and all consider, that, though goodness of heart, which would serve a fellow-creature as itself, is better than empty form; yet our duty to God, a knowledge of his will, and a building up of our souls in his most holy faith, can alone fill that heart with Christian graces, and sustain in our hands a real labour of love.

My brethren, if such is the import of the Sabbath, are we not, each and every one of us favoured with the light of the Gospel, bound to turn our day of rest to good account? In the discharge of this duty, the richer members of society are especially concerned; for on them depends very much the observance of it by the poorer also. Let them therefore guard, not themselves only, but their children, servants, and dependants also, from all that is inconsistent with the object of the ordinance. Let us all endeavour, not only, not to spend the day

134 THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

badly, but to spend it well, in encouraging and assisting others in the knowledge and love of God, as we ought to spend it. And, by God's grace, may we all employ the few Sabbaths, and the few days, which we have on earth, so that we may finally enter into that eternal Sabbath, "that rest, which remaineth for the people of God in heaven."¹

¹ Heb. iv. 3, 9.

SERMON VI.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

Exodus, xx. 12.

Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

WITH the fifth commandment we arrive at the consideration of the second table, and our duty towards our neighbour; the sum of which is, as regards our affections, that we should love him as ourselves,¹ and as regards our actions, that we should do to all men, as we would they should do to us.² Not that these rules are to be interpreted to the letter, but by their spirit: not that the

¹ Matt. xxii. 39.

² Matt. vii. 12.

rich is to measure his bounties by his wants, of which he has none : not again that any man is to commit sin for another, though he might desire it to be committed for himself : but that every one, in dealing with his fellow-creatures, should put himself in his neighbour's place, and so act, as he might fairly and righteously wish another in that case to act towards him. The poor ask relief of their necessities from him who swims in affluence and plenty : he neither needs nor desires an alms : but he may not therefore refuse to bestow it : he must bring home the sufferings of others to his own sympathies ; he must suppose himself poor and destitute, in tatters, and starving, as the beggar at his door ; and consider, what an argument for bounty he would then find in another's opulence ; how pinching deprivation would plead, that he who had enough, and to spare, and to waste upon extravagance, ought to help him who had nothing ; and that the very obligation to relieve want arose from a man's never

feeling it, and being raised, as it were, out of the reach of its sensation. It is too common among the wealthy and prosperous, to do as they would be done by in the literal, and therefore the wrong, sense of the words. They do not wish for help, and so they imagine that they need not help another. They are happy, and do not want consolation, and so they never think of giving it. They are careless or secure as regards themselves, why then should they be careful for others? This is indeed to distort the intention of our Lord's precept, to turn the rule of benevolence into a maxim of worldliness, and pervert the Gospel to selfish ends. It is true, we are not altogether to forget ourselves, and leave either our fortunes or morals at the discretion of those about us. In that which may be my ruin, it is not imperative on me to become surety for a neighbour, because, if our situations were changed, I might desire him to do so for me. Still less can it be my duty to commit evil. He may ask me to ex-

tricate him by falsehood from his difficulties; he may desire me to say what is untrue, or to give false evidence, that he may be rescued from his danger; and, pressed by his apprehensions, I might be wicked enough to wish the same of him: but the rule of Christian charity will lend no countenance to his request; what he wants is altogether foreign to our Lord's precepts; for it is what neither he nor I ought to ask, or to receive, of any man. But whatever we may justly ask, whatever another may justly ask of us, that we ought in charity to do. And to melt cold indifference to a neighbour's sufferings or injury, place yourself in his situation, when a question arises of benevolence, or affront, or wrong: ask yourself, if in his circumstances you would like to be refused, or your self-respect would be wounded, or your interests prejudiced by the course you now propose to pursue:—and you will often discover, that what seems reasonable enough to one party concerned, becomes an outrage to another,

and what was harmless in your esteem as the active agent, is converted into insult, or injustice, when you have made yourself the passive recipient or sufferer.

In the first and literal sense of the commandments, there is a distinction between those that can be enforced by human penalties, and those that can not. God, being able to read the thoughts, applies his laws to the heart and disposition. Man, being able to judge by actions only, opposes his precautions to the actual commission of crime. Hence to honour parents, or to covet, so far as it is an inward duty of the soul, is not, and cannot be, a subject for human legislation.

Again the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth commandments forbid certain definite actions. The infraction of these then, in their first sense, can be, and is, punished by man. But the fifth is a positive precept: it does not forbid any thing; but enjoins you to do some thing. And positive precepts are generally indeterminate; you cannot de-

fine precisely the extent or manner, in which each and every child should honour his parents. It is not for every child to support his father or mother, but it is the imperative duty of some. Marriage, profession, or position in life, emancipates one child early from parental control : another of the same house is retained in filial obedience to advanced years. Circumstances must determine what is right in each case. And, amid the infinite variety of circumstances that occur, human laws cannot meet the variety of obligations which are created. They may, indeed, repress some flagrant violations of the duty : but they cannot enforce the adequate discharge of it.

Let it not then be supposed, that the commandment is unimportant, because men have passed it by in making laws for society. The Apostle calls it "the first commandment with promise."¹ In the prophet Ezekiel to "set light by father

¹ Ephes. vi. 2.

and mother" is classed among those fearful crimes, that were to "scatter Israel among the heathen, and disperse them in the countries, and consume their filthiness out of them."¹ In the Gospel our Lord himself confirms the injunction of the Law; "God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death;"² and upbraids the Scribes and Pharisees with their hypocrisy, in making the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition: "Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free."

The fifth commandment is peculiar, in awarding the temporal recompense of long life in the promised land, to the Israelites who obeyed it. The Apostle renews this assurance of reward in the

¹ Ezek. xxii. 15.

² Matt. xv. 4.

world: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord. Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth."¹ Obedience to virtuous parents gives the best hope of the "life that now is, as well as of that which is to come." Christian principles, and the blessings that result from them, are thus handed down from generation to generation; and each child becomes the preceptor in his turn, of the truths which he has learned from his cradle. The precepts of one education are thus continued for ages, through which no one is hardy or impious enough to question what has descended from his ancestors. What responsibilities are thus entailed! How may the disobedience of one child contaminate in turn successive families of his offspring! How may the neglect or bad example of one parent entail ungodliness,

¹ Ephes. vi. 1.

vice, and misery, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate God. Thus it is the sins of parents are visited upon children. Thus it is we understand the lesson conveyed in the blessing of the Rechabites: "Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he hath commanded you; therefore thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever."¹

Brethren, consult your own hearts on a subject, in which the heart should be so intimately engaged, and the conscience can alone reply to expostulation. Is there any among us, who, like the Pharisee, would pretend, that what he owes his parents, he has made a gift to God? I speak not of food and raiment only, but of those attentions, and submissions, and endearments, which constitute so much

¹ Jer. xxxv. 18.

of the happiness, that a child can bestow on those who gave him birth. Is there any one, who, when parents claim the honour and solace due to declining years, will not bear with their infirmities, but revolts against their correction in trifles of every-day occurrence, and pleads that other youth is indulged with greater freedom, nay! that God has made him master of his own actions, and responsible for them? Is there any one, who, when a father calls on him to obey, rather cavils, and disputes the wisdom of what is enjoined, or, under pretence of uncommon talent, or superior devotion, spurns the authority of parents, guardians, and elders? If so, is it not to make the commandment of God of none effect? Is it not to plead in his holy name, but to set the heart in opposition to his will? Is it not to present a new image of those Scribes and Pharisees, who were upbraided with their hypocrisy? "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother,"

said the wise man.¹ And, "Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord," says the Apostle.² And a request must be unreasonable indeed, to justify a child's refusal: and a parent's command must be unrighteous indeed, to make it right that it should be disobeyed.

To comprehend the purport of each commandment in the second table, we may refer to the duty towards our neighbour set forth in the Catechism. We are to love, honour, and succour our father and mother: for "the eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pluck it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."³ Who can forget the curse invoked when Ham mocked his father? "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren:"⁴ and the curse abideth on that people

¹ Prov. i. 8.

² Coloss. iii. 20.

³ Prov. xxx. 17.

⁴ Gen. xix. 25.

to this hour. We are to fear our parents : “ Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father.”¹ We are to reverence them : Rachel said to Laban, “ Let it not displease my lord, that I cannot rise up before thee.”² We are to maintain them if they need : “ Let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents,” says the Apostle.³ It is impossible to define the services of filial piety. Its blandishments will be unconstrained, and its caress sincere, because the spontaneous fruit of pure affection ; it will comply with every wish of parents, that is not inconsistent with other duties : its first delight will be, to minister to their enjoyments, to soothe their anxieties, to contribute to their happiness, and receive the smile of their approbation : it will recoil from contradicting their counsel, and counteracting their purpose ; and that, to avoid the semblance of opposition, and the more strictly

¹ Levit. xix. 3. ² Gen. xxxi. 35. ³ 1 Tim. v. 4.

therefore in proportion as the matter is of little import : it will lend them aid in business, support in necessity, and society when it is agreeable to them : it will deny itself amusements in order to amuse them : it will wait upon their infirmities, and be the staff of the old man's decrepitude : it will bear patiently their peevishness, and conform readily to their habits, and sympathise fondly with their complaints : for where should old age find indulgence, if not in the partiality, and gratitude of its own children ?

But further, we are to honour and obey the Queen, and all that are put in authority under her : " Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake ; whether it be to the king as supreme ; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him." ¹ We are to submit ourselves to all our governors ; " Let every soul be subject to the higher powers : " ² to teachers and pastors : " for

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 13.

² Rom. xiii. 1.

they watch for your souls:¹ to masters: "Servants be subject to your masters with all fear."² We are to order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters: "Ye younger submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."³ So that, in the command to honour father and mother, we are in fact enjoined to respect constituted authorities. "The powers that be are ordained of God." The first and universal authority is that of the parent. Others are incidental to different states of society; and submission to them is a duty to God, a matter of conscience in itself, as well as of expediency, or necessity, so long as the superior does not oppose his commands to those of the Almighty. If a parent, a master, or a magistrate, orders a child, a servant, or a subject, to break

¹ Heb. xiii. 17. ² 1 Pet. ii. 18. ³ 1 Pet. v. 5.

the divine commandments, the course of duty is to disobey. The laws of God are superior to those of man. Whatever terrors are suspended over your head : whatever persecutions urge you to acquiesce : resist them as temptations to sin, and endure them as trials of your faithfulness to heaven. If, in other lands, masters urge the slave to profane the Sabbaths and services of God ; let them not be obeyed, in spite of all the tortures cruelty can devise, and the pains that bondage can inflict. If, in our own free country, the servant of Mammon bids you pass every Sabbath over the ledger, at the counter, or in the store ; disobey, though plenty invite on one hand, and penury repel you on the other, if you resort to the congregation of the faithful. Such covetousness is indeed idolatry. And if another Nebuchadnezzar bid you fall down to the golden image, brave the burning fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that in a more fearful than any earthly judgment ye

may "receive no hurt." If another Darius forbid prayer for thirty days, enter the lions' den with Daniel, and a good angel "shall shut the lions' mouths," if "innocency be found in thee." If Satan offer you all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, to fall down and worship him, repel his overtures with the contempt which they merit, serve the Lord thy God, and his angels shall come and minister unto thee. Thus it is allotted us in these days also, to bear the cross that Christ bore. Thus it is, in these days also, we may enlist in the noble army of martyrs; by sacrificing worldly advantage, the favour of a vicious superior, the benefit of a service that estranges us from the knowledge of God, nay! even the love of a parent, who would divert his child from the duty due to the Almighty. For "he that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me," says our Lord. "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother,

or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

This is indeed no balsam to the anxious heart. The duties of life are in fact a succession of trials. This supplies no excuse for wilful disobedience. It applies to the case, where gratification would allure to obey, and suffering is the penalty of not obeying. If ease, or ambition, or passion prompt you to refuse submission; mistrust that prompter: lest it be found at the last, that you indeed have broken the commandments, in refusing to your superiors the honour God enjoins. Again this supplies no authority for rebellion, for revenge, or violent resistance: but for endurance only. The servants of God rebelled not against the Chaldean or the Median. Our Lord himself summoned not the twelve legions of angels to avenge him, when betrayed and oppressed.

In his word all authority is classed with that of parents; and those who hold

•

authority are called by the name of parents.¹ Thus Joseph says God had

¹ Abimelech, that common name of successive kings of the Philistines, signifies, "The king my father." An inventor of any art or science, seems also to be called father in Scripture, as Jabel is said to be the "father of them that dwell in tents," and Jubal, "the father of such as handle the harp and organ" (Gen. iv. 20, 21). And in a similar sense we are probably to understand our Saviour in the passage, "Call no man father upon earth, for one is our Father which is in heaven" (Matt. xxiii. 9). That is, do not yield yourselves to the doctrine of any man, as if he had the authority of a father or inventor of sacred knowledge, for one only has such, that is, God. Such a sense is consistent with the general purport of the chapter in which the precept occurs, and with the caution given elsewhere against those who taught for doctrines the commandments of men; and it is known that the Jews called their doctors and instructors by the name of father, and were prone to yield themselves without examination or contradiction to believe and follow their doctrines. The Apostle seems to have adopted the expression, when he calls Timothy his own son in the faith, and when he enjoins, "The elders entreat as fathers, and the elder women as mothers" (1 Tim. v. 1, 2).

●

made him "a father to Pharaoh."¹ Thus Job says he was "a father to the poor."² Thus Micah bids the Levite be unto him "a father and a priest."³ Thus the servants of Naaman address him, "My father."⁴ Thus Elisha cried to the prophet, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel."⁵ Thus the Apostle speaks to the Corinthians as "not having many fathers in Christ, for I have begotten you through the Gospel."⁶ Ministers of the Gospel are yet called fathers in many countries: public benefactors have been so styled in more. The government of every family has been described as a monarchy.⁷ Let a father beware of making it a tyranny. In a house, as in a state, subjects advanced in age and intelligence, demand a share in the councils and the government, to the support of which they lend their aid.

¹ Gen. xlv. 8.

² Job, xxix. 16.

³ Judges, xvii. 10.

⁴ 2 Kings, xv. 3.

⁵ 2 Kings, ii. 12.

⁶ 1 Cor. iv. 15.

⁷ Aristotle.

Happy the monarch, who, in the state, or private family, has so ruled those under his care, as that they become prudent councillors, and faithful defenders of his throne.

And this brings us to matters of more immediate import, the reciprocal duties of superiors. And first of parents to children.

Helpless infancy stretching out her hands, and uttering cries of dependence, without any power to alarm jealousy, or guilt to alienate affection, at once tells the heart its duty. Tenderness grows by its own exercise ; and the pleasure you communicate to a child, is soon reflected back upon yourself. It is true, there may be a parental, as well as a regal, tyrant. The latter exceeds in the number of his slaves : but the former in the misery his passions may inflict. Princes can seldom venture on those freaks of injustice, which may be indulged with impunity in the secrecy of a private abode. A father may divert his solitude

by the rigour of his precepts, and the force of his commands. He may please himself with exciting terror, and inflicting pain. He may delight in imagining the desires that flutter on a tongue forbidden to utter them, or the yearnings that prey on a heart in which fear confines them. He may amuse himself with prohibitions, chidings, and punishments; and swell with exultation at the forced homage he receives. But if he can see submissive misery without relenting, and meet without emotion the eye that implores mercy, he has closed the avenues of domestic happiness in arming his heart against parental tenderness; and the fruits of his discipline can only be, a perverse temper, a deceitful disposition, or a broken and prostrate spirit in his child.

The angels who attend the throne of divine majesty, are represented as watching likewise over the cradles, and faltering steps of children. And if such is God's regard for helpless infancy, that he charges the ministers of his own presence with

the spiritual protection of these little ones, how much more must he demand it at the hand of parents, who are, under him, the authors of the existence of their offspring, and, however they may be sanctified by grace themselves, are yet instruments in imparting the original guilt of man to the progeny they introduce into the world. To borrow an apt illustration, "The chaff is carefully separated from the wheat that we sow; and yet the wheat which is produced grows up with husks and chaff about it."¹ Do you then believe Baptism to be instituted by Christ for the initiation of your little children to his kingdom, and the bounties of his grace? nay, to be the only spiritual privilege, which their tender age renders them capable of receiving, and for the reception of which they are dependent upon your disposition to obtain it for them? And if so, can you, who are a father or a

¹ AUG. EP. 222

mother, endure that your carelessness or contempt should deprive your infant offspring of the blessing, and that your charity for the fruit of your own body should not care to apply the remedy for that sinful and corrupt nature, which you yourself have imparted? Consider but for a moment the responsibilities of him who has wilfully withheld his child from Baptism; consider what would be your sensations, if your son or your daughter died out of the pale of Christianity, an alien from Christian ordinances in life, and therefore to be so in death, and this with no one to reproach for it but yourself; consider, too, the precariousness of life at tender years, the varied catalogue of accidents and other means of sudden death, the uncertainty of obtaining ministrations at the moment when they may be required, and the ease with which they may be accepted when offered in the House of God, and no other evidence can be wanting than the response of parental affection, to enforce the urgency

of the duty of bringing infants at an early age to the baptismal font.

And after introduction to the Christian Church, a parent's next charge is, to train up his child in the knowledge of Christ, and of God. For this the Almighty confided in Abraham: "I know Abraham, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment."¹ This Moses enjoined upon the Israelites: "Forget not the things which thine eyes have seen, but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons."² And we shall do well to make our children like Timothy, who "from a child had known the Holy Scriptures ;"³ and who, doubtless, had been trained in that knowledge by his mother and grandmother, whom the Apostle commends:⁴ and to try such instruction, and bring it into a sort of

¹ Gen. xviii. 19.

² Deut. iv. 9.

³ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

⁴ 2 Tim. i. 5.

practical application, by catechising and questions, a manner of teaching that has obtained the sanction of all ages of Christianity, and without which the sermons of the pulpit can be hardly expected to produce much fruit: for it has been well suggested, that continuous discourses are like rain falling on a smooth surface, which trickles off as it descends; but questions and examinations are like digging and breaking up the soil, and making it fit to absorb and retain the moisture that is poured upon it.

In discharging the duties of education, parental pride, and anxiety for a child's success, sometimes forces the mind into premature activity, and the talents into precocious display. But a late spring produces the most fruitful autumn. The delay of blooms, and fragrance, and verdure, is fully compensated by their richness. The blossoms which lie concealed awhile, till the sun is high, escape the chills that are fatal to early luxuriance, that prey on the first smiles of vernal

beauty, and bear down the tender flowers unopened to the ground. A thousand graces, by imprudent exposure in their first budding, wither in the rude blast of the world's contentions. Genius catches at laurels before his time; and mocks the hopes he had awakened. Ambition, eager to be rich, endangers his fortune in wild adventure; or panting for the bubble reputation, decks his character in artificial plumes, which experiment or competition will speedily pluck away.

Some lend all their care to the mere embellishments of education, and forget the more important principles of truth, and virtue, and religion. Female accomplishments supersede the cultivation of female intelligence; and perhaps exclude the "one thing needful." The tradesman and the mechanic, with the ambition of parental regard, curtails his comforts at home, that he may provide his children, what he mistakes for good instruction, because it is something similar to that of wealthier citizens. His sons and

daughters bring back idle frivolities to a home of frugal industry and simple self-denial. They have imbibed a taste for the indulgences of another class of society, without the full intelligence that will estimate them at their proper value ; nay ! often to the utter contempt of Christian duty. Their attention has been directed to objects that will promote neither their welfare here, nor their salvation hereafter — to objects their home does not afford, and ordinary exertion opens to them no prospect of attaining. And thus their acquirements become but snares in their course of life : and desires and ambitions, which cannot be gratified with innocence, become allurements to vice.

But to advert to another and more fatal class of errors.

When the capricious menace, the oath, or the curse is the language of a parent : can it be, that he “provokes not his children to wrath ?”

When the voice of prayer is never

heard at the domestic hearth, when the offspring remains unbaptized, the example of a father is to neglect the House of God, and to despise the invitation of Christ to his Holy Supper: can it be, that he is bringing up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?¹

When the school is at hand, but not attended; when advice is offered, but not heeded; when books are distributed, but not read; when cunning is the lesson, and duplicity the pattern, and worldly gain the only object: can it be "training up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it?"²

When little means are squandered in improvidence; when the gifts of charity are turned to the purposes of intemperance; when example initiates in the waste of the pawn-shop, the abandonment of strong drink, the brawls, the profligacy, or the recklessness of the

¹ Ephes. vi. 4.

² Prov. xxii. 6.

drunkard: can it be, that a man is providing for his own house, as the "children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children?"¹ Can it be, "that if his son ask bread of him, he doth not give him a stone? if he shall ask an egg, he doth not give him a scorpion?"²

My brethren, consider to what such a parentage is bringing up its offspring. Is there not here the germ of the vice that crowds our streets? the budding of the crime that will shake society itself? the plant of no feeble growth, that will distil poison from every leaf and branch, till it destroys in body and soul the wretched beings, who should have been sheltered beneath the tree of everlasting life? Parental relations being broken, the ties of duty and religion being snapped asunder, there remains no stability to public, any longer than to domestic welfare.

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 14.

² Luke, xi. 11.

And what are the fruits such parents must expect from the seed they thus sow, in a soil too well prepared by nature for its pestiferous increase? Is it not that their children, who should have been their richest blessing ("happy is the man who hath his quiver full of them"), shall spring up a curse and a sorrow to those that gave them birth? Are they likely to honour an earthly parent, who has taught them to dishonour their heavenly one? Are they likely to reverence their father in the world, whose example leads them to neglect their father in Heaven? Remember that your every act is your child's most influential teacher. For what lesson can supersede the living maxims of a father's conduct? And what solace, what patience of infirmity, what aid in distress, can you expect from those whom you yourselves have taught to despise the God who commands them to give aid, and the Gospel, which alone

can open the heart with love to its fellows?

One great duty which a parent owes his children, is to set them a good example. He will seldom, it is to be hoped, be so abandoned to depravity, as not to teach, and recommend, and wish them to practise what is good. But, alas! what can be the effect of empty words, if they are contradicted by actions? of what avail can be your exhortations or advice, if your own life palpably belies them both, and renders them a reproach of yourself?

The relation of other superiors to those placed under their protection and guidance, opens a field of obligations that affect all the business of life. The civil magistrate is to watch over the public welfare, to rule his subjects with gentleness, and above all with justice. The teacher and spiritual pastor is to be faithful in his teaching, to admonish kindly of the sinfulness and danger of going astray from God, to lend his aid in bringing

back the prodigal son to his father, and the lost sheep to his fold. The master is to make provision for his servants, to remunerate them with liberality and exactitude, not to be more rigorous in judging their conduct than his own, and to take care that nothing shall be wanting on his part to maintain among them a knowledge and a faithful service of God. The elder, too, is to advise the younger with the more prudent counsel of grey hairs, to encourage them in what is right, and, as years subdue the vehemence of passion, to shew an example of circumspection to the impetuosity of youth. And those who are in higher station are to condescend to their neighbour of low estate ; not to curl the lip with haughty disdain, or despise the poor ; not to stand aloof in heartless pride, and look on selfishly insensible to the wants of others ; but to remember that they are fellow-men and Christians ; and that when we come before the judgment-seat of Christ, titles, and wealth,

and distinctions will be no more, except as we may be distinguished, each by the faithfulness with which we have served God, and kept his commandments. In a word, the obligation of superiors is, to remember for what purpose they have been, by God's good providence, set over those who are put under them:—that it is not for themselves alone, to gratify their vanity, or give them a profusion of the good things of this world, while others are in want; but that the object of their elevation is to promote the happiness of all around them; that they were made great for the sake of the humble, and exalted for the welfare of the lowly. “Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.”¹

Time will not permit me even to enumerate other duties contained in the fifth Commandment: so ample a source

¹ Matt. xx. 26.

is it to a stream of Christian morality, copious, and fertilising human happiness. In the retirement of your chambers, endeavour, my brethren, to fathom its depths, and drink of its pure waters. Examine your own lives in the reflection of its crystal bosom; and where negligence, temptation, or passion has left a spot, wash out the stain through the blood of the blessed Mediator, and restore the fair complexion of righteousness by the grace of the Holy Spirit, whom our Lord sent to supply his place in sanctifying and strengthening his disciples.

SERMON VII.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

Exodus, xx. 13.

Thou shalt do no murder.

REFERENCE is here made, not only to the actual destruction of man's life, but to all that concerns the safety of it; to any violence that can be offered it; and hence also to those passions that anticipate violence, to anger, hatred, and revenge. As the Catechism explains it in setting forth our duty to our neighbour; I am "to hurt nobody by word or deed; to bear no malice or hatred in my heart."

To constitute murder, man's life must

be taken wilfully and unlawfully. This is the crime that Cain early introduced into the world, and his punishment was greater than he could bear.¹ This is the crime again denounced after the flood, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."² This is the crime that is at once a sin against God, who made man in his own image, and is sole Lord of all his creatures; against nature, which has bound men together by ties of reciprocal dependence and common fellowship; and against society, which is a combination to protect and secure the safety of all its members. Therefore it is again enjoined in the Law of Moses, "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death."³ And to the same effect our Lord himself rebukes his Apostle Peter in the Gospel, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."⁴

¹ Gen. iv. 13.

² Gen. ix. 6.

³ Exod. xxi. 12.

⁴ Matt. xxvi. 52.

But the blow that is accidental does not incur the guilt. To kill undesignedly, without malice or premeditation, is a great misfortune indeed, but it is not murder. "If he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or have cast upon him anything without laying of wait, or with any stone, seeing him not, and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm, then shall the congregation judge, and restore him to his city of refuge."¹ And there are circumstances in which it is lawful to kill: in the execution of justice; for, "the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses:"² in a just war; "When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, be not afraid of them, for the Lord thy God is with thee:"³ in self-defence, if life is endangered; for it is the natural right of every man to protect
 a ; yet not rashly, lest he take

¹ Num. xxv. 22. ² Num. xxv. 30. ³ Deut. xx. 1.

another's life, when there is no peril of his own.¹

But it is the part of the religious teacher to insist chiefly on those duties which human legislation cannot reach. The shudder with which a man regards the extreme penalty of the law, is enough of itself to convince him of the moral atrocity of taking the life of another. Let us then consider the occasions of bloodshed, that may not at first sight exhibit their guilt so prominently.

And first hatred. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer," says St. John :² "and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." God can discern the secrets of the heart ; and he who wishes evil, is in the divine judg-

¹ Vid. Exod. xxii. 2-3. It is lawful in self-defence to kill a man breaking into your house by night, but not by day. This distinction has been made in the laws of Greece, and Rome, and our own country, as well as of the Jews.

² 1 John, iii. 15.

ment, what he who wilfully does evil, is in the judgment of man. The murderer in disposition may stay his hand, checked by the fear of human penalties; and so far human penalties discharge the duties assigned to them in protecting human life; yet the moral guilt remains unmitigated; the malignant temper is the same as if the wound had been inflicted, that should send its victim out of the world; the inner man is depraved, though the spot of blood is not upon the skin. It is fear or impotency alone, that has withheld him from the execution of the deed: and fear or impotency is no palliation of moral turpitude or depravity. So true then is it, that in the sight of God, we need not the actual commission of crime, in order to condemn us; it is enough if the criminal temper and purport is within. "He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death."¹ Christians above all men are bound in one covenant

¹ 1 John, iii. 14.

of love, adopted by one Father, redeemed by one eternal Saviour, sanctified by one imparted Spirit. Their Lord prayed, that they might be one, as he and his Father are one. He enjoined them to love even their enemies, to bless those that curse, and pray for those that spitefully entreat and persecute them. God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son to die for the world. Hatred is so directly conflicting with the spirit of him, who offered his life for his own murderers, that those who hate cannot have fellowship with Christ, cannot be in the communion of his Church, cannot in a word be Christians. God is love. And, “if ye love not your brother, whom ye have seen, how can ye love God, whom ye have not seen?”

Akin to hatred is envy, a passion that feeds its malignity on the well-doing of a neighbour, and turns the happiness or prosperity of others into pain and torment to ourselves. It suffers the very virtues of others to become an incitement

to crime, and the first murderer, Cain, killed his brother from envy of a better disposition, and a more freely accepted sacrifice.

Next anger. Yet not all anger is sin ; for, “be ye angry, and sin not,” says the Apostle : not the anger of virtuous indignation ; for the anger of Moses, the meekest man on the earth, “waxed hot, when he saw the calf and the dancing :”¹ not the anger that rescues the oppressed ; for, when ye shall afflict the widow or fatherless child, “my wrath shall wax hot,” says God himself.² But a hasty temper ; “let every man be slow to anger :”—but irritation ; “Charity suffereth long, is not easily provoked :”—but when it is continuous ; “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath :”—and when it is without cause, it breaks the Commandment ; for, “ye have heard that it was said of old time, thou shalt not kill : but I say unto you, that whosoever

¹ Exod. xxxii. 19.

² Exod. xxii. 24.

is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."¹

In the short history of Jonah, we have a striking example of the inconsistencies and perverseness of an irritable temper. Having prophesied the destruction of Nineveh, he became angry that the Almighty should spare it: he was irritated because he knew that the Lord "was a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repented him of the evil."² The prophet was provoked, because God was appeased, and could hardly forgive the mercy, which forgave the repentant Ninevites: and so he exclaimed in the petulance and folly of a child, "Now, O Lord, take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." And when the worm had destroyed the gourd which sheltered him, he was equally exasperated; "And

¹ Matt. v. 22.

² Jonah, iv. 1.

God said to Jonah, doest thou well to be angry for the gourd ;” and the prophet’s passion so far transported him, that he replied, “I do well to be angry, even unto death.” And he sat in his booth, breathing enmity and destruction, and quarrelling even with God for his goodness, and, as it would seem, more ready to fire the city himself, than to suffer it to escape by the divine mercy.

Anger blights affection, breaks the tenderest ties, dissolves the noblest friendships. It is a short-lived madness, that forgets every thing but the pang it can inflict at the moment, and will perhaps repent of in an hour. Its immediate impulse is to injure ; and the injury is usually defined only by the power of inflicting it. Hence a man’s rage is vented on those that are beneath him, or in his power ; on his children, on his servants, on his dependants ; on those whose resentment he does not apprehend. His humours are the greeting he prepares for those bound to him by obligations ; or

the comfort he affords the wife of his bosom. They are seldom exhibited before the great, to whom he looks up; who can retaliate, and whom therefore he fears. He will curb his passion when provoked by those he dreads; till he can find a weaker object to trample upon with impunity. This debases the angry man, almost as much as the secrecy of coward stratagem does the malicious. And hence it is, that the mean-spirited and pitiful in a struggle with superior force are often the most violent and outrageous to those under their control.

There is scarcely a situation in life, that irascibility does not render a man unfit to hold. At home, one hasty temper may destroy the happiness of a whole family. In the relations of marriage, of parent and child, of employer and servant, the irritable man becomes at once a bad husband, a foolish father, and a cruel master. His peevishness and petulance chills every disposition to please. His repulsiveness estranges regard; or afflicts

tenderness, if its ties are too strong to be broken. His children fear him as a capricious tyrant ; because he does not “ have them in subjection with all gravity.” He is hated by his dependants ; because “ he wrests the judgment of the poor in his cause.” He injures those who love him ; he tramples on the weak in his passion ; or oppresses the innocent in his susceptibility of offence.

In public, the scene of his inconsistencies is enlarged. He disturbs the harmony of society, and provokes outrage amid the assemblies of good fellowship. He stirs passions as malignant as his own ; and perhaps hurries a noble soul from a world that it adorned, on the pretext of a whisper, or the frivolous resentment of a joke. If his follies permit him to obtain power, he may plunge multitudes into misery for an intemperate expression, or by his hasty interpretation of a word. Many a good man has sunk under perverted justice, many a people has been ruined by oppression, where no

deliberate ill-will has existed, but because the dictates of passion have controlled their earthly destiny.

Men in humble station perhaps quarrel with less deadly weapons : but the same principle applies. There is the same violence ; the same anger ; the same bad motive ; and there may be the same fatal result. At least the same malice, the same desire to inflict injury, the same recklessness of consequences, exists in their hearts as in those whose station and habits have supplied more fearful means of displaying irritation.

The generous spirit may not be always free from anger, and much less from indignation : but it will curb those frequent bursts, and cut short that protracted continuance of ill-humour, which is the weakness of less noble souls. Passion must be ruled : or it will rule with a reign of terror. And to indulge the malignant affections, is to make ourselves unhappy, as well as others. If a man stands combustible, and ready to

flame on every thing that touches him, life is as uneasy to himself as he renders it to all around him.

Of all the malignant passions, perhaps revenge is the most difficult to control, and the most strictly forbidden in the Gospel. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth : but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil ; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."¹ Of the servant who forgave not his fellow, the Saviour says, "His Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, until he should pay the uttermost farthing. So likewise shall your Heavenly Father do also unto you, if you forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." A Christian is often heard to exclaim, this man does not deserve any thing from me : I will repay him his offence : this is too much to be forgiven. But such is not, and cannot

¹ Matt. v. 38.

be the language of the true disciples of Him who laid down his life for sinners. When Peter asked, if he should forgive his brother seven times, our Saviour replied, "Unto seventy times seven." "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink."

If a slight or injury is received, the desire to retaliate seems so natural, that a man flies to vengeance, without consideration of circumstances that might palliate the offence, or excuse the offender. This leads him into positions, from which it is difficult to recede, and folly to go on. The fancied insult was perhaps unintentional. Then follow painful regrets, which strive (probably in vain) to atone for unprovoked wrong inflicted on one, for whose regard the heart is yearning, but whom an impulse of resentment has estranged for ever. In this are all the evils of a sin of ignorance, but not its apology. For, whether it is the slanderer who has vilified, the friend who has betrayed, the

inferior who has neglected, or the powerful who has trampled on you—in whatever case you deem yourself aggrieved—you cannot retaliate upon the aggressor for the sake of giving him pain, without breaking the laws of the Gospel. You may defend yourself: and self-defence may demand and warrant the infliction of pain upon others. But, if that infliction is the motive, if that pain is the object, to inflict it is an undoubted sin.

This is the characteristic of the malignant passions, that marks their unchristian virulence and baseness: their real gratification is immediately and expressly in giving pain to a fellow-creature. Other bad affections too often convey a pang to those ill able to endure it: but the suffering is not, as in anger, malice, and revenge, the very object of the vice, and direct cause of the gratification: affliction is the incidental result; and the vicious at worst but disregards it. Here, on the contrary, he turns his whole thoughts to the misery he can inflict; his mind is

wrapped up in the contemplation of it : it is the end and aim of his hateful pursuit ; it is the brutal incitement of his energies ; it is the dastardly pleasure of his labours, and the hideous fulfilment of his hopes. The extortioner ruins his neighbour by his extortion : but he does it for the sake of his own gains, not for the sake of hurting another. The revengeful ruins a man for no possible benefit that can accrue to himself, but for the sake of doing him harm. A parent's misery and a child's despair too often succeed the excesses of the profligate. But the resentful seeks no pleasure for himself, except what he obtains from the agonies of his victim, tortured by his hands, and writhing under the wounds he himself has inflicted.

Could God be moved by these fitful passions—were the Almighty to avenge our offences in the modes of human resentment, what hope could remain for any one of us in the day of judgment !

And with what calamities has the

world been visited from intemperate passion? war with all its horrors devastating the fairest portions of the globe for an affronted tyrant: sedition with its secret conspiracies, and the coward stroke of the assassin, to revenge an injured subject; many a wife a widow, and many a child an orphan, from the hatred of private individuals: resentment following insult: new injuries and fresh retaliations succeeding: anger converted into fury, and dislike ripened into hatred: all spurn the restraints of the Gospel which they profess to obey, and use a law towards each other, which they could little bear the Almighty to use towards them.

But a neighbour provokes you, his affronts are insufferable, his hatred unmitigated. Fellow-sinner, whose very language betrays that you are suffering from the same distemper, have you tried the one only efficacious means of making that man your friend? Do good to him that hates you. Do him a kind office; a good service; and see if that will not

melt his hatred, and your own. "It is better to give than to receive." A good heart is as much affected by the good it does, as by that which is bestowed on it. Make experiment of one act of kindness, and you will be led on to try another. The difficulty of doing good for evil is in the first instance. When the barrier of pride and passion is once broken down, the better feelings expand, the heart melts in its own warmth, your enemy begins to think he is mistaken, his enmity abates, his stern repulsiveness is relaxed, and a space is opened for better sympathies.

Thus only can you heal the wound, which an injury you believe yourself to have received, has inflicted on your temper. So long as resentment rankles in your heart, you are harassed with fierce emotions, a prey to self-inflicted torture. And there is no other balm to assuage the anguish of a soul torn by revengeful passions, but in sincerity and truth to forgive the object of revenge.

“Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.” If any argument will prevail upon those crude antipathies and harsh resentments—if any reflection will subdue the haughty temper, that is quick to discover provocation, and rush impetuous to revenge—it is the recollection, that every one of us must appear as debtors, to sue for pardon and pity, at the judgment-seat of God, trembling under his all-seeing eye, as our offences against him are summed up in fearful arraignment, casting ourselves on his compassion, and crying out for mercy, which is promised only to such as have shewn mercy. Who are you, that seize your fellow-servant by the throat, and drag him to prison, because he cannot pay a hundred pence?—a poor wretched debtor, who owe ten thousand talents—who, whatever patience your Lord may have, whatever time he may allow, whatever facilities he may afford, can never acquit yourself of the obligations you have contracted. Look into your own life: sift your own con-

science ; that soiled memory of the past ; those secret longings for forbidden gain ; those vain pictures of corrupt imagination : shake out, and expose to view your offences against God and man : throw into a heap every sin of thought, and word, and deed : lay on the top of all your wilful and presumptuous sins, uppermost, where they are in truth, next to the eye of heaven : consider that you will stand at the last tribunal, and all these laid bare before the angels, and saints, and all the hosts of heaven, and Christ the judge of all : consider the emotions of that moment, when the scales are on the balance—the anxieties, the hopes, the fears, the plea, not for justice, but mercy, only, merely, mercy, pity, pardon, grace—and then say, who is the fellow-sinner, that you will not forgive, because he has been betrayed into offending you by infirmities like your own.

St. Stephen, in the forefront of the host of martyrs, has set an example how to love, and to forgive the deadliest foes.

When he was stoned, he kneeled down, and looked up steadfastly to heaven, and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

And if a Christian, harassed by petty provocations, burns to retaliate : if his angry passions conjure up the image of his victim writhing beneath the infliction of his vengeance, and tortured under agonies of his arm, which should have been powerful to save ; bring him to Gethsemane, to that perfect Being, whose conscience reproached him with no wrong ; and he shall see the Son of Man bending under persecution and treachery ; he shall see his Lord buffeted and spit upon ; he shall see the Christ led out to Golgotha crowned with thorns, and ridiculed with the mockery of a purple robe ; he shall see him suffer and die ; but die for his tormentor's salvation, and praying for his murderers in his last breath : " Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

See ! he bears our griefs, and carries

our sorrows : the chastisement of our peace is upon him. See his "troubled gestures, and the bloody sweat ! strange symptoms of the pangs that rend his righteous heart !" See him bend on the earth ! See him struggle on the cross ! See the body fainting, and life expiring ! but mercy unextinguished ! " This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

Humble yourself, proud, angry man ! Be something of that to your fellow, which your Maker is to you ; and learn a lesson of peace from him who brought it down from above.

But to note other subjects which fall within the scope of the sixth commandment, there are some, who create occasion of death or injury by neglect and carelessness ; and for fatal accidents by fire, and water, and enterprise, which a little care might have prevented, they are too apt to console themselves with the reflection, that injury was not intended. Yet the injunctions of God's word leave little room for the consolation :

“When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thy house, if any man fall from thence.”¹

Again, some create an occasion of ruin, by putting temptation in the way of the weak and ignorant: the first lapses into sin are not corrected, but the sinner, perhaps a youth, is led on to the commission of greater crime, and, it may be, for the gratification of revenge in his conviction. Some even have been found so base, as to entice the unwary into offences, for the sake of what they may afterwards gain by betraying the offenders. But in this matter also let the unscrupulous and hard-hearted remember our Lord’s solemn denunciation: “Whoso shall offend” (or make to fall) “one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” The

¹ Deut. xxii. 8.

whole passage is too long to be quoted here : But I beseech you, brethren, to read it, the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew, in your chambers. Consider how the subjects are connected together, from the offence of little ones, (which means putting a stumbling-block in their way) to the recovery of the lost sheep, the manner of dealing with a brother who has trespassed, and finally, the unmerciful servant ; and then consider how he will stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, who has not cared to save or reclaim an early offender, has enticed him into further guilt, and shewn no pity.

Again, some have gone so far, as to contrive death for the innocent and unwary, by placing them in ships they mean to wreck on distant shores, or in houses they propose suddenly to destroy. And what is this but murder ? What is it but to “ set another Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire from him, that he may be smitten and die ? ” And though thou didst it secretly,

what shall God do before all Israel, and the light of this sun ?

Another offence against the sixth commandment concerns all of us especially who take part in the administration of justice. To consent to a man's being put to death, to give way to the wishes or sentiments of others against your own convictions, where the life of a fellow-creature is at stake, is to associate yourself with those who commit murder. Pilate washed his hands, and avowed that he was innocent of the blood of Jesus, yet yielded to the outcries, "Crucify him, crucify him," and delivered him up to be put to death, though he found no fault in him. And his guilt was little less than that of the Jews, blinded by animosity, who exclaimed, "His blood be on us, and on our children."

To connive at murder, and leave it unavenged, is to share its guilt. Ahab knew nothing of Naboth's execution, until the deed of death had been committed. But then, because he suffered

the murderers to go unpunished, the prophet charged him with the crime, "Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?"¹ And even to conceal a murder is to participate in its guilt; and the law of Moses enjoined, that, if a man was found slain, and it was not known by whom, the elders of that city should wash their hands, and protest, "that they had not shed his blood, neither had their eyes seen it;" as if to intimate, that if they had seen, and concealed it, they would have been esteemed accomplices of those who committed the act.

Some, though they would not contrive the death of another, yet venture to lay violent hands upon themselves, as if God were less the lord of their lives, than their fellow-creatures. They mistrust the protection of their Heavenly Father; they are ill content to run with patience the race that he has set before them; they withdraw themselves from his con-

¹ 1 Kings, xxi. 19.

trolling hand, and cut short an existence, which, for his good purposes, and in his superior wisdom, he may have seen fit to prolong. And can it be that suicide is not self-murder, or that bringing the means of improvement to so abrupt a conclusion, can differ in moral guilt from a determination not to be improved ?

The man that puts an end to his own life, must be desperate indeed : desperate, not only as concerns the things of this world, but also those of the world to come. To the commission of other sins he may be tempted in the hope, that he shall live to repent, and make his peace with God : but in committing this he precludes all opportunity of amendment ; he dies in his sin, his very death is his offence, and those hands, which are so soon to be lifted up at the tribunal of Christ, in their last earthly act are imbrued in his own blood. May God give us grace and strength, that we may never so far sink under the sufferings of this life, as to be induced by them to brave

the sufferings of a life to come. What are shame, or poverty, or even the horrors of a guilty conscience, in comparison with a death like that of Judas, and the perils of eternal judgment, into which he plunged impenitent !

Once more, the duellist, if he meets his adversary in malice or revenge, to inflict an injury, outrages every principle of the charity inculcated in the Gospel ; if his concern is only and purely to preserve his own reputation, he provokes his antagonist to commit a crime, from which he recoils himself with horror. In the latter case, the offence against charity is little less heinous, though the method of offending is a little more circuitous. Private challenge and private combat never can be consistent with the precepts of the Gospel, or the religion of Christ.

But these are matters of which human law takes cognisance, and of which we happily may be spared the full picture in this place. Let us also guard our-

selves from stepping into the path that leads towards them. It is a forgiving temper, and a sincere regard for the welfare of our fellow-creatures, that our Lord seemed to prefer to every other virtue. He enjoins love and charity more frequently—on these truly Christian points of duty he is more earnest in his appeal to our hearts and hopes, than on any other. He makes forgiveness of our neighbour the very condition, on which alone we can expect or ask forgiveness of God.

SERMON VIII.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

Exodus, xx. 14.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

THIS commandment is directed against the class of sensual excesses. It enjoins us to subdue the body, and all those carnal lusts and affections, that a fallen nature has implanted in man. Sensual enjoyments are to be put under constraint, and submitted to the laws of virtue and religion. They are not altogether proscribed. In this the treatment of them differs from that of the malignant passions. The latter are to be put out; to be utterly quenched; to be entirely

superseded by the antagonist affections, love, mercy, meekness, charity. But the senses have been bestowed on man for his happiness, and, if regulated, will conduce to his welfare. The appetite, of which the excess is gluttony and drunkenness, is of itself necessary to the support of the body. It may not be eradicated, or extinguished, lest life itself should be endangered. But it must be subdued, it must be held in restraint, and guarded within due bounds.

The subjugation of natural appetites is a distinctive feature of Christianity, which again and again enjoins us to crucify the old man with his affections,¹ and to put on the new man, in self-constraint, purity, and godliness.² "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."³ The teaching of other schools has lent its sanction to indulgence, and dressed up images to fan the flame of a

¹ Rom. vi. 6. ² Eph. iv. 22, 24. ³ Rom. xiii. 14.

favourite desire. The polished heathen of antiquity enshrined his deities in sensual pleasure, and worshipped them with voluptuous excess. Mahomet promised his disciples a paradise of that license unwearied in another world, to which he imposed no restraint in this. And, under an earlier dispensation, even the servants of God himself seem to have been permitted a liberty inconsistent with the happiness of society as it is now constituted. But the Gospel at once and throughout insists on the duty of self-denial and self-control. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."¹ Our Lord well knew, that the happiness of man consists in the quietude, not in the excitement of unruly affections; that their strength will fail, if not pampered by luxurious aliments; and their harassing activity be lulled to rest, if denied all objects of occupation. Our very amusements become insipid,

¹ Gal. v. 16.

if they are not varied ; in the pursuit of idle pleasures, if the object is not changed, our ardour languishes and dies away ; and a life of sensuality, what is it, but a succession of alternate longings and aversions, appetite cloyed, and appetite renewed, the inner man for ever agitated by desires, which are surfeited to disgust, or re-excited into ungovernable disorder ? To repress these cravings is to consult our real enjoyment of this life, as well as our preparation for the next. And the divine wisdom and goodness were united, righteousness and peace had kissed each other, when the dispensation of grace enjoined the constraint of fleshy appetites. “ If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”¹

Among the Jews the excess specifically forbidden in this commandment was punished by death. “ Moses in the law,” said the Scribes and Pharisees to

¹ Rom. viii. 13.

our Lord, "commanded us, that such should be stoned : but what sayest thou?"¹ Our Saviour, who then came, not to judge, but to save, bid them see the beam in their own eye, rather than search vindictively for the sins of others. And they did see it, and left him alone with the woman. And he bade her go, and sin no more. Thus he did not deviate from the merciful purport of his mission. Thus he called, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The day of his judgment had not, and has not yet arrived. He by no means palliated the heinousness of the offence, or relaxed the stringency of the law. On the contrary he expressly extends its purport : he forbids sins that had been less earnestly insisted upon. He applies

¹ John viii. 5. It is one of many difficulties connected with this passage in the Gospel of St. John, that the punishment denounced against adultery in the law of Moses was death (Levit. xx. 10), by which the Jewish doctors understood strangulation to be meant.

himself to the thoughts of the heart, out of which proceed evil desires and concupiscence, the things that defile a man. "Ye have heard, that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery : But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."¹ And he exemplifies the universal self-denial that he enjoins, by those striking instances : "If thy right eye offend thee," (that is, make you fall, place a stumbling-block in your way) "pluck it out, and cast it from thee : for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee."

The excesses of other appetites are connected with, and often lead to that already specified. They also are expressly forbidden. The excesses of

¹ Matt. v. 28.

drunkenness : " Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess." The excesses of foolish talking, and jesting : " Let no corrupt communication go out of your mouth."¹ The excesses of idleness, and dissipation : " Let us walk honestly, as in the day ; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness."² The excesses of dress : " I will that women adorn themselves in modest apparel with shamefacedness, and sobriety."³ The excesses of social intercourse : " For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in revellings, banquettings, and abominable idolatries."⁴ In a word, the admirable summary of the Catechism gives the best general rule : " to keep our bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity," " If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die :

¹ Ephes. iv. 29.

² Rom. xiii. 13.

³ 1 Tim. ii. 9.

⁴ 1 Pet. iv. 3.

but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”¹

To temperance the Apostle adds watching : “ Be sober, be vigilant.” Our Lord had enjoined it with prayer : “ Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” Exercises of penance have been corrupted, debased by credulity, and confounded with repentance ; until even those working out their salvation with fear and trembling, have rejected the observance of them, as a vain delusion. Though John the Baptist preached repentance in the austerities of self-denial ; no raiment of camel-hair, or leathern girdle about the loins, now announces the season of mortification, and repentance. Though our Lord fasted forty days in the wilderness ; no abstinence is now observed, except indeed at the tables of the poor. Though Jerusalem, and all Judea went out into the wilderness, confessing their sins ; no retirement from the

¹ Rom. viii. 13.

pleasures or business of the world is now inculcated. Theatres are open, and revels are not interrupted during Lent; and a darker cloth in the church is almost the only mark of that season of discipline, which is to prepare the soul for the passion and resurrection of the Redeemer. But were not the early Christians more wise, in retiring to the solitudes and deserts, to meditate awhile on their souls' health, and repress those offending appetites, that run wild in the occupations of a busy world? Were they not more wise to become, as David, like the pelican in the wilderness, and the owl in the desert;¹ that loneliness might hear the voice of their groaning, and they might be with God in solitude, when his indignation and wrath pressed on them? Were not our ancestors more wise, in appointing stated seasons of austerity and mortification, to break the chains of sensuality, that bind us to our

¹ Psalm cii.

enjoyments ; to interrupt the attractions of pleasure ; to rouse the mind, and invigorate the principles of self-control ? “He who restrains himself in the use of things lawful, will not encroach on things forbidden.” He who is ever hovering over the precipice of indulgence, cannot hope to be secure. He who is ever nibbling at the pleasures it is fatal to partake of, cannot hope to be safe from the poison. Austerity is the natural antidote to licentiousness. And when the great work of repentance is begun, retirement and prayer withdraw the soul from the blandishments of secular delights, and introduce it to the growing peace and joy of communion with heaven.

There is a charm yet lingering about that wilderness hallowed by our Lord’s fasting and temptation, which invites us to make trial of the discipline he imposed upon himself. There is a charm about those rocks and solitudes, in which the Baptist “turned the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,”—sol-

tudes, to which the primitive Christians, witnesses of the world's conversion, retired to meditate upon their soul's health, as if the forest only was congenial to the depth of their repentance, and the desert alone supplied enough of silence for the examination of their hearts. They seem to have gathered consolation, and plucked strength, from the caves, and crags, and mountains : and the waters of Jordan, that washed the penitent in baptism, carried off to the bitter sea of death all the stains of sin that had defiled him.

The Psalmist too, when his heart was smitten, sought the shades and loneliness, and compared himself to the bird that shuns the light and the day. Into retreat and solitude he retired from the dangers of society, and guarded himself against temptation : " I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top." There he denied himself, and humbled his soul with sorrow before his offended Lord : " I have eaten ashes like bread,

and mingled my drink with weeping, because of thine indignation and wrath." There he set us the example to retire into ourselves awhile, and separate from the busy world, and court the converse of conscience alone with God. The closet and the chamber may be our retreat and wilderness. The silent midnight hour may find us watchful, contrite, and in prayer. When the hum of voices is hushed, and the agitations of busy multitudes lulled into repose, stillness may wrap up the soul in solitary meditation, and darkness aid contrition to discern the misery, and guard against the allurements of sin. By abstinence, and self-denial, and prayer, we may school ourselves into holiness and obedience to the divine will. Not that bodily exercises of themselves will avail, or mere external ceremony be profitable to salvation—not that the fasting from material sustenance will be accepted as a service pleasing to the Great Searcher of men's hearts—but that the constraint put upon one appetite

may make us better able to control all ; and that self-denial in part and for a season may render us more complete masters of ourselves in every thing and always.

When the world demands an effort of recollection and thought, the worldly man retires to his closet, or shuts himself up in his office. And to look back on life ; to disentangle complicated actions and circumstances ; to discover actuating motives of the heart ; to curb indulgences that have already gone too free ; demands some seclusion from sport, and noise, and business, and folly. To suspend the pursuit of worldly things, to pause for a while in a worldly career, is indispensable to deliberation on that greater pursuit, in which alone miscarriage cannot be repaired, and failure cannot be rectified.

To the rich especially may be commended occasional exercises of abstinence, austerity, fasting, seclusion, and prayer. Put the unruly appetites and desires of the natural man under a temporary discipline, that will render more easy the dis-

charge of ordinary duty, and the guard of general innocence. "The virtue that ever must be watched," it has been said, "is not worth the sentinel." But who is there, that may not be improved by a just retrospect of his own failures? Commune with your own hearts, and in your chambers. Go into retirement, and in your closets consider the frightful images of sin, and ruin, and shame, and misery, that encompass you in this great city. Is it possible, that these can have been the ministers of your pleasures? Is it possible, that the indulgences of Christians should cost more affliction, than all the tyranny of Eastern despots, and the superstitions of sanguinary idolatry? Consider the multitudes of those wretched outcasts of society, that infest the streets, and lurk in the abodes of profligacy—many the victims of poverty, as much as indiscretion—some exposed by a parent's neglect, or harshness—depraved without a disposition to depravity. Is it possible, that these have been allured to ruin by a

Christian's gold, that he would not give to succour destitution? Is it possible, that so much is lavished upon instruction in vice, to destroy; and when an appeal is made on behalf of education in piety and religion, to save through the Gospel of Christ, the scanty pittances are doled out with niggard hand, or perhaps altogether refused? Summon up to your contemplation the train of suffering, that follows, stealthy and sure, in the track of female guilt. Calculate the aggregate of misery: the want; the disease; the reproach; and the crime; in which the victims of licentiousness are encompassed, and bound down, until death introduces them to another scene, for which they are so ill prepared. Character for ever gone; and with it the means of honest support. For, into what service can they enter? The prospect of marriage, that great object of female happiness, for ever blasted: and with it all domestic ties cut off. Mark the degradation of soul, the annihilation of moral principle, the

recklessness of purpose, the broken spirits, and the prostrate hopes; the perception of guilt gone; and an easy admission opened to every iniquity. Mark the ravages of dissipation on the outward form. Or, if any sense of shame is left, the inward horrors of a conscience, that dare not look into itself; that dreads repose, lest it should have time to think; that is wearied with excitements, which it dare not relinquish; that shrinks from recognition of friends and kindred; and thinks every gaze it meets, is directed upon itself, a known object of disgrace for the finger of scorn to point at. Is self-indulgence so much the object of a Christian's idolatry, that he will sacrifice whole hecatombs of human happiness on the altar of his gratification? The eagles gather round the carcase, and corruption invites the ravenous to the scene of death. But they prey upon the corse, and consume the dead body that invited them.

No single vice corrupts the mind, and depraves moral principle in man, more

than that forbidden by the seventh commandment. It gets a hold upon the thoughts, and seems to poison the fountain of imagination. The ideas become wrapt in one unseemly object ; and every energy and effort of the soul are debased to one degrading purpose. The tone of the mind depends on the objects of its ambition and desire. Elevated aspirations cherish noble principles. Gross and sensual desires bring down the moral estimate of right and wrong, the rule of honour and integrity to a depraved and grovelling standard. In humble life the progress of crime is usually commenced ; with the higher classes probity and religion are disregarded, when a man enters on a dissolute career.

I speak not of that fictitious honour, which permits stratagem to ruin character and virtue ; but not to obtain possession of your purse. I speak not of that integrity, which abhors deceit ; but applauds the address of successful intrigue. I speak not of that generosity, that shrinks

from extortion ; but will take advantage of one in its power or influence. Another honour, and another probity guides the Christian. Let the nature of the injury be inferred from one crime to which it sometimes leads the victim. If there is an affection planted by nature in the heart,—if there is a passionate fondness, that burns unbidden in the human breast—Nay! the very instinct of animals supplies it to the tigress in her lair, and the pelican tearing her breast for her brood—if there is a duty indicated by all that love can prompt, and all that pity can plead—it is a mother's care of her own offspring. Yet, that mysterious pride—that power of maternal tenderness, so pure, so indefinable, so hard to eradicate from the fond breast it occupies as its natural seat, has been found to yield to an endeavour to conceal disgrace, by the most unnatural crime the imagination can devise. How unsupportable must be the agony, which can induce a mother to forget her nature ;

to quench the pity for her own infant, which she would have shewn a stranger's; and to destroy her child.

“Judge therefore yourselves,” brethren, “that ye be not judged of God.” Are you bearing any part in the infliction of such horrors? It has been truly said, “Irregularity has no limits; one excess draws on another; and the most easy, as well as the most excellent way of being virtuous, is to be so entirely.” “Enter in then at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction; and many there be which go in thereat.”¹ Remember the latter days of Solomon, and their contrast with his early virtues. Remember the fall of David, the man after God's own heart: and therefore God raised up evil against him out of his own house, and the sword was never to depart from his house. Remember those, whose blighted promise and disappointed hopes your own

¹ Matt. vii. 13.

experience has witnessed; and you may learn, how seldom excess escapes a share of the penalties, it wantonly inflicts on others.

But it is not by one method only, that we may contribute to the misery I have faintly sketched. The seed of sensual excesses, let me repeat, is in our nature. It has been sown in fallen man from the day of his first father's corruption. It grows, and flourishes, and becomes rank and luxuriant by its own vital powers. Education and religion must clear the soil of tares and hemlock, before a better harvest can spring up. The natural man must be overcome. The old man must be crucified with his affections and lusts. This is no easy task. Have you then, who are parents, borne any part in the infliction of this misery, by neglecting or perverting the education of your children? The injury is not the less sure, because it is indirect. It is not necessary, that you should actually sow the seed. It is there already. It is enough if you allow it to

grow. If you do not early pluck out the weeds, you will never be able to check their increase. How do you expect the nature of your child to be restrained if you never teach the lessons of self-restraint? How should your child put on the new man in Christ, if the example of his parents is ever before him, clothed in the carnal appetites of the old man of the world? How should he live to the spirit, if he sees you ever living to the flesh? How do you expect to reap the fruits of righteousness, if you have not planted the fear of God, and respect of every ordinance of religion? Has the conduct of your house been a continuous lesson of modesty and virtue? Have you screened your children from the contamination of every thing, that can suggest improper thoughts, or poison innocence? This is a subject of nearer import, than many may at first suppose. The children of the rich are entrusted to servants, of whose morals and discretion parents may be ill assured. The family

of the poor, confined perhaps to a single room, must imbibe through every sense the spirit and character of the parents, with whom it is in constant contact. And upon these early impressions much depends the lot of offspring. They become happy in innocence, worthy citizens, and faithful servants of God ; or wretched in guilt, outcasts of society, and reprobate of heaven, which they outrage ; in proportion as their nature has been unreclaimed, or precept and example have together brought them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

One other consideration for the Christian parent. A common practice renders the first lapse from virtue irretrievable. The door is closed against repentance. The parent drives his child from his roof ; (this may perhaps be necessary to protect a family from infection of guilt). But he also spurns her from his countenance, and abandons her to destitution. And this a father, who professes the Gospel which declares, that "there is joy in

heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance." Consider to what a fate, in this world, and the next, a Christian thus consigns his own offspring. Consider the irretrievable sentence he thus passes. Consider the irresistible impulse by which he forces her to utter infamy—to drink the cup of shame and misery to the very dregs. Consider that a little care, and tenderness, and pity, might perhaps have saved his child. I speak not without reason. One of the greatest difficulties of those societies, that reclaim the young from such a course of vice, is the refusal of the parents to restore even the penitent (so far as man can judge of penitence) to a place in their affection and care.

I am not adverting to the obstinate and determined. But where there is a hope of recovery, consider the precious reward of saving a soul from sin. Consider the fearfulness of offending (of putting a stumbling-block in the way of)

your own child, and shutting her out from amendment, whom heaven invites to repentance. Consider, above all, whether the frailty you condemn by the hard measure of unforgiving justice, is not, in some sort, the fruit of your own neglect, of your mistakes in the discharge, or your example in the perversion, of the duties of a parent. Is it not possible, that you may be condemning yourself? that the sins of the father are visited upon the child? that with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged? and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured unto you again?

What if drunkenness and riot have been the habits of a daughter's home, and she has long witnessed in her parent the intemperance, differing only in kind, which he now condemns with such harsh justice in her. "Strong drink" renders a man incapable to govern himself, much more to bring up his children in the self-control that the Gospel enjoins: "Be not

drunk with wine, wherein is excess,"¹ or, as the expression here seems to signify, mental incompetency, infatuation, and imbecility.² Drunkenness clouds the understanding; it impairs, and for a time destroys the memory, and obliterates with it all sense of obligations; it betrays the secrets of those who are ill judged enough to confide in one addicted to the vice; there are few, whose fortunes it will not reduce to beggary, and, if their purse is not exhausted, their health and strength must fail; and those, whose provision de-

¹ Ephes. v. 18.

² *Acoria* commonly signifies waste, riot, or extravagance, but it is also used in the Greek histories of Rome to signify the character of an intemperate man, whose vices or follies rendered him unfit, in the eye of the Roman law, to conduct his own affairs. In this sense the force of the expression, and its connexion with the rest of the passage, is obvious; in the translation of our version it seems to want meaning, and to be unconnected with what follows, as well as with what had been said of wisdom and understanding in the 17th verse.

pend upon their own exertion, it soon pinches with destitution; character and energy together fail; a distressed wife reproaches the husband with too much justice not to wound, and children cry to him for bread, which he cannot supply; hunger, and cold, and rags, and a ruined family, drive him to despair, or to the commission of crime; the companions who shared the spoils of his hearth and home, no longer think of him, when he is in banishment or a gaol; no man pities him; and he lives perhaps to hear, that she who laid on his bosom is begging her bread, and his daughter a common outcast in the paths of vilest profligacy.

For the excesses forbidden by the seventh commandment offenders seldom escape a fearful retribution in this world. The drunkard and the harlot pay dearly for a few hours of licentious excitement by years perhaps of protracted misery. May God grant, that their sufferings in this life be deemed an adequate penalty, and extend to them his pardon in the life

to come. And may we take warning by the examples of affliction we see around us, to regulate our affections and desires, to subdue the cravings of our evil appetites, and to put ourselves under such discipline, that we may hereafter be found, to have been pure in our own conduct, and no cause of guilt to others, when we shall appear before our Lord in the day of his final judgment.

SERMON IX.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

Exodus, xx. 15.

Thou shalt not steal.

THIS commandment, like the rest, forbids a whole class of sins, and under one term enjoins many duties. I am "to be true and just in all my dealings; to keep my hands from picking and stealing." To steal, in this sense, is not only to take directly what belongs to another; but also to get, or keep, by any means, however indirect, that which by right another man should have. To impose unfair prices, or give false descriptions in trade; to borrow money, or run in debt, without being

able, or without intending, to pay ; to extort from the needy, or those in our power, who cannot resist, and have a right to protection from the very hand that oppresses them ; to serve the extortioner, or give countenance to the fraudulent and unjust ; to help the thief in stealing, or to receive stolen goods ; to take undue interest for money lent ; to take unfair advantage of private wants, or augment public necessities in a crisis of difficulty ; to bribe men to do that, which equity forbids, or demands to be done without a price ; to seek gain by pandering to the vices of the wicked ; to reduce ourselves and families to want by idleness, waste, or negligence ; to commit any of these sins is to break the commandment, and will bring the soul into danger from the wrath of an offended God, even if the character and fortune should escape the indignation of man.

The rights of property seem to be inseparable from society, and to become more extensive in proportion as the social compact is more fully entered into. Two men

cannot live together in the rudest state of savage nature, without each having something that he will call his ; and though the spoils of the chase and spontaneous fruits of the forest are their sole means of sustenance, yet each will assert a separate claim to what his dexterity has won, and feel aggrieved if the other should deprive him of what he has gathered for himself. It is true that the land may be their common hunting-field : the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, floating in their native elements, belong to neither ; and may be the prey of one or the other : but so soon as they are compassed about with a net, or caught with the snare of the fowler, he who has bestowed his labour on their capture will maintain and have a right to their possession, and to dispose of them as he may think fit. Hence in the very earliest ages of the world symptoms of property appear. At the creation God gave man dominion over the fish, and fowl, and every living thing, and gave him

every herb, and every tree bearing fruit.¹ At the fall the woman took the forbidden fruit, and gave it to her husband. Their son Abel was a keeper of sheep; and that flock, of which he offered the firstlings to the Lord, must have been his. The early patriarchs possessed oxen, and camels, and asses. In the dry and heated plains of Canaan wells were an early object of solicitude, and so of exclusive right: "Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is ours."² As population increased, and agriculture occupied attention, estates fell into the hands of individuals, and lands were divided with more precision, than in the days of Lot, when Abraham said, "If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right."³ As civilisation advanced, as the wants of men became more numerous, and the division of la-

¹ Gen. i. ² Gen. xxvi. 20. ³ Gen. xiii. 9.

bour more complete, the distinction between what is a man's own, and what is another's, became more nicely defined, and more extensively applicable, until now there are few things in which all have a common right, the very elements are made to belong to some, who bestow labour on the provision of them, and property is fenced about with protections indispensable, because the methods of assailing it are so numerous. The violence of the open robber must be repressed, the cunning of the fraudulent must be met with ingenuity equal to his own, the devices of extortion and oppression must be counteracted by legal intricacies and moral refinements, until the artificial machinery almost hides the divine origin of the principle, and we forget that honesty is a duty we owe to nature and to God.

“Stealing,” says Chrysostom, “is one of the effects of idleness.” Every man must get a living: and if he does not by honest industry, he must, in many cases, by dishonesty and theft. Therefore the

Apostle, when he says, "Let him that stole, steal no more," adds, "but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."¹ St. Paul himself fulfilled the precept; amid the cares of his ministry maintaining himself by a trade, that he might be a burthen to none. To live upon charity, unless forced by relentless necessity, is a species of dishonesty. To obtain alms by false pretences is direct and palpable fraud. To obtain them by any means, is to consume a portion of that bounty, which is not enough to supply the wants of the truly indigent: for the poor shall never cease out of the land: and to consume that portion, if you are not really in need of it — in a word, if you can do without it — is to get what in truth belongs to those who cannot help themselves. Some old laws obliged a man to give account of his earnings, that, if he did not honestly ob-

¹ Ephes. iv. 28.

tain enough to live upon, he might be treated as a rogue, who must gain his livelihood unfairly. And it is into the hands of the idle, the profligate, and the mischievous, that fraud and theft too often convey the hard-earned savings of the industrious. The wealth of the great, or the pittance of the poor — the hoardings of avarice, and the widow's mite, as dear to her, as treasures to the rich, are thus made over, not to the use of him, who would serve his fellows by enterprise and energy; but to the miserable sluggard, who has not the spirit to work for his own, and much less for another's good — to the vagabond of the highway, or the drunken spendthrift lurking in the dens of licentiousness and dissipation.

“Ye shall not steal,” says the Holy Scripture; “neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.” “Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him.” “Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness: that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not

for his work."¹ "In thee they have taken gifts to shed blood : thou hast taken usury, and increase : thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord."² "This is the curse that goeth forth over the whole earth : for every one that stealeth shall be cut off." "Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

The curse here denounced seems to visit, in this world, as well as in the next, possessions that have been obtained by fraud, injustice, or robbery. It seems as if Providence suffered them not to prosper, and, if a vast fortune has been accumulated by such means, it is speedily lost again, or, if it lasts the life of him, who made it, is dissipated before a second generation has risen to its inheritance. Luxury and intemperance devour what theft and rapine have amassed, and so, under God's hand, one sin is made the

¹ Jer. xxii. 13.

² Ezek. xxii. 12.

avenger of the other. Or, if there is too much prudence to squander wealth, all the care and caution of its unjust possessor will not confer the disposition to enjoy it; anxieties will vex him in the use of it, and conscience haunt him with recollections of the means by which it was obtained; the fear of detection and exposure will harass him, or some incident cross his path to reproach him with that of which he is ashamed, and which, if it were known to others, would undo him. The honest, though his meal is scanty, may enjoy in peace the portion, which it has pleased Providence to bestow upon him. He drinks no tears of those he has defrauded, nor breaks the bones of the oppressed, out of whom he has wrung hard gains; his conscience does not gnaw upon him within, though it is but a bit of bread, and a cup of cold water, that his labour has earned to support the outward man; the coarsest morsel is better cheer to him, than the delicacies of pampered luxury to the extortioner, whose ears yet ring with the

cry of the wretched, whom he has reduced to penury, or the wailings of the sufferers, whom his avarice has put to torture, and his eye would not pity. "Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right."¹

But to consider the more secret and indirect modes of fraud.

To take advantage of another's simplicity or ignorance, is in the eyes of God to steal. This may be done in many ways; and in the common business of life, and in trade especially, the subtilty of men has found out so many artifices to defraud and overreach one another, that it would be as difficult to recount, as it is to escape them. There are false weights and measures, "an abomination to the Lord:"² there are false descriptions and commendations, false promises, and undertakings which there is no purpose to perform: there are counterfeited wares, and counterfeited stipulations: there is the overvaluing what you wish to part

¹ Prov. xvi. 8.

² Prov. xi. 1.

with, and the undervaluing what you wish yourself to obtain : there is the change if you have sworn and covenanted to your own hurt, a characteristic the very opposite to that approved by the Psalmist :¹ there are as many contrivances to deceive, as there are pursuits to follow, and covetous dishonesty prompts as many fraudulent stratagems, as all the transactions of life do employments or occupations. Plans are so cunningly devised, and artifice so deeply laid, that conviction becomes impracticable with men who cannot read the heart ; but if, by hiding what ought to be told, or by wilful misrepresentation, one gets possession of that, which by right belongs to another, is he any less a thief, because human insight cannot penetrate the mind, to convict him of wilfulness in the act ? Is his robbery less criminal, because he has blinded the eyes of the world, as well as of the victim he robs ? Is he the less guilty, because the being he defrauds

¹ Ps. xv. 5.

cannot expose the imposition, is obscure, or friendless, or at a distance, the slave of the foreign oppressor, or the Indian of the distant forest? The seeming palliatives, that screen the character in the eyes of men, in truth and religion, serve but to aggravate the crime. It is upon the simple, the poor, the innocent, and therefore unsuspecting, that such extortions are practised. They have not knowledge to foil the skill of the extortioner. They have not means to expose, if they detect him. They are, perhaps, in his power. They are needy, and weak, that he may overbear, and injure. They are under his control, that he may crush their fortunes, and ruin their little prospects. They dread his anger, if they complain, or his resentment, if they resist. "And when the poor has nothing, save one little ewe-lamb, which he has bought, and nourished up : and it has grown up together with him, and his children : it has ate of his own meat, and drunk of his own cup, and laid in his bosom, and

has been unto him as a daughter:— the rich man, having many flocks and herds, spares to take of his own flock, and his own herd; but takes the poor man's lamb, and dresses it."¹ And "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing, is a son of death. And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and had no pity." It is because his victim is powerless to resist, that his sin is greater before God, who is the father of the fatherless, and pleadeth the cause of the widow. That singleness of heart, in which is no guile, that simplicity, which lays the poor open to extortion, may form a claim on high, more precious than all the worldly wisdom in which we boast, and all the earthly wealth we so greedily covet.

The humbler orders of mankind are really most deeply interested in maintaining religious principle, and integrity, and virtue. Their all is at stake upon the

¹ 2 Sam. xii.

general sense of right and wrong. Nothing else can protect them from the aggressions of men more powerful than themselves. In every page of the history of the world, we read the same lesson: the happiness of the poor depends on the moral principles that pervade the whole people, of which they form a part. Witness the devices of Abraham to ensure his safety, when he went into Egypt. Witness the condition of the Israelites in that same country. Witness the state of slavery in all ages and lands. Witness the Mahomedan and the heathen of this day, as compared with Christian nations. Some are apt to talk of men, who have nothing to lose. Every man has, or ought to have, much to lose. He has a wife, or a child, to be preserved from ruin. He has at least the labour of his own hands to be protected from unremunerating compulsion. What saves him from being compelled to work at the will of one stronger than himself? Christian probity. What secures to him the wages

of his industry? The same Christian probity. What protects his earnings from the extortion of the crafty? What above all assists his honest endeavours, when they are insufficient? If the wealthy and the strong were leagued together to despoil the simple, and savage the poor, who could withstand them? Little does that man understand the worth of Christian morals, who thinks that the few, the great, and wealthy would be the chief sufferers from general dishonesty. Do away character; make fraud general, and it is the mass of the people that will prove the victims of the common depravity. It is the simple and weak, who will be at the mercy of every designing sharper, or powerful oppressor. And he who has gained much already, will thus be provided with a mighty engine for extorting more.

The aggravation of injustice most earnestly insisted upon in Scripture is, that the victim of it should be unprotected, an orphan, or a widow. The denunciation of the law, and the indignant rebuke of

the Prophet, is alike directed against those who judge not the cause of the fatherless. The dying parent, perhaps, conveys to his familiar friend, in whom he trusts, the guardianship of his offspring, and charge of their worldly affairs. He satisfies himself that his children are provided for, and departs the world in peace. But the spirit has scarce fled its earthly dwelling-place, when the friend despoils the orphan committed to his care. He neglects his charge; or embarks it in adventure for his own profit, or consumes it for his own benefit. He has deceived the dying parent, that he may rob the son. Beside the death-bed he has veiled his villany in hypocrisy, that he may crown the father's grave with the ruin of his child.

A too common mode of defrauding is, to incur debts without providing for their payment. Unforeseen circumstances may sometimes form an excuse. In trade especially crosses and misfortunes may render a man unable to fulfil engagements, that he entered into with perfect honesty,

and apparent prudence. These are not the circumstances that call for a harsh interpretation, to render more poignant the regret which they occasion. It is the case of him, who incurs debts without a provision or a prospect of payment—who squanders in wilful extravagance what is due to the industrious who have trusted him—who deprives the labourer of his hire—who reduces the honest to beggary, and takes from children the bread for which the parent has toiled—this is the case, to which the commandment refers; and this the man, who is little, if at all, better than a thief. Hundreds may suffer for the gratification of his prodigality :—that his table may be set with dishes, that he cannot taste—that his house may resound with silly, and in this case, impious mirth;—that he may ride in state, and be gazed at by a stupid throng of starving people. And what will it all avail him? Will it relieve conscience of a pang; or answer one importunate demand? However becoming

may be pomp in its proper place, it must prove bitter, when it is not honestly obtained. The glitter of that equipage is but the tawdry mask of its maker's ruin, seated inflexible within: and the other inmate knows the spectre is at his side. Those sounds of revelry come loaded with the cry of starving families. Those viands are poisoned by the attendant cravings of deluded creditors. That passage through the street in grandeur is but robbing the industrious, whose labour has been spent in vain, and whose industry is deprived of its just reward. "Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy; *at his day* thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it: for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it; lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee."¹

Surely that man is more elevated in character, more noble in worldly, not to speak of Christian spirit, who contents

¹ Deut. xxiv. 14.

himself with the little honest exertion can earn, and the humble lot in which it has pleased Providence to place him. But such is the fictitious constitution of society, that men of rank and station seem combined, to encompass their fellows with temptations to such dishonesty, and to turn against the man of humble means his honourable ambition of associating with the great and good. A display of wealth, however borrowed, is a better passport to the notice even of those most estimable in the world, than talents and acquirements not so easily stripped off. The ardour of emulation leads the aspirant to borrow plumes that are not his own. And he does it at the cost of injustice to others, and unhappiness to himself.

There is another vice, in its excess intimately connected with offences forbidden by the eighth commandment, the vice of the gaming table, which Holy Scripture does not specify. The Gospel does not enumerate every deviation, by

which we may turn out of the paths of rectitude, but throws open an extensive and commanding prospect of our duty; the grand Christian principles are bold, distinct, and prominent in the view; and the light in which they are clothed may easily be applied and reflected to minute details hardly distinguished at first sight. The disposition of the finished gamester is thus discovered to be inconsistent with Christian character. That sordid desire of gain, irritated by exercise, and absorbing every faculty; that covetousness which mars good affections, and supersedes bad ones; that idolatry, in which pride can stoop, and ambition bend the knee to a golden image, is a motive of action, alike in its secret springs, and its overt enterprises, repulsive to the charity, the unselfishness, and beneficence of a disciple of the cross.

To hazard misery, to suffer it, or to occasion it to others every day, is to render the heart as callous as the die on which fortune is risked and lost. That

he may plan, and work out with calm precision the ruin of his companion, a man's breast must be void of every spark of compassion or remorse.

And to succeed this, the temptation stirs the inclination also to defraud. Depredation is committed under the eyes of men of character and station, by knaves they cherish and protect, and sometimes imitate; or every advantage is permitted, that can be taken of the young, the unwary, and the inebriated, by superior coolness, skill, address, and activity. The very virtues are degraded to serve the cause of vice. Prudence, self-command, and foresight, are summoned to the unworthy office of working the ruin of the thoughtless, hot-headed, and improvident. Nor professed friendship, nor unsuspecting youth, nor the rights of hospitality, which the Arabian robber holds sacred, will protect from the snare. Nay! men whom years and experience should have warned, have been made,

first the dupes, and then, alas ! the partners, of the crime.

The patrons of a vice which poisons the very source and principle of integrity must be responsible for the countenance they afford, and the part they take, though they do not incur the guilt that is branded with public shame, or the penalties that are enforced by human laws. They approach the precipice, though they deem themselves, and perhaps are, too wary to fall over : if they are safe, they are probably blinding others to the danger : their boldness may be the destruction of the inconsiderate : they perhaps protest against excess ; but they prepare the soil, they trench the ground, they scatter the seed, and shall they not be answerable for the increase ?

A more degraded and ignominious offender is the wretched dependant on the caprice or vices of the wealthy, who gains a living at the expense of character and virtue. This is the resource of mean minds, without a sense of credit among

men, or religion with God. They aspire to no place. Esteem and distinction has no charms for them. They are the panders to every vice, that escapes the penalty of human laws; profligate upon system; not led away by passion, or yielding to unruly affections; but calculating the returns, cool, and mercenary in the service of iniquity: sometimes in secret, sometimes in avowed, but always in enmity with virtue: selling all for Mammon: and accomplishing to the full the description of the Apostle: "knowing that such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."¹

There is one case, in which the number of persons upon whom the fraud is committed, seems to alter the complexion of the crime in public estimation: I mean that of smuggling; which is nothing less than defrauding every body. It is called defrauding the revenue, as if to palliate the

¹ Rom. i. 32.

offence : but the revenue is the property of the whole people, and to rob it of its due, is in reality to rob them. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," said our Lord, who wrought a miracle to pay tribute for himself and Peter.¹ Yet men of reputation for integrity have sometimes looked with complacency on this crime ; and some have not scrupled even to practise it. They would spurn the imputation of dishonesty with indignation : but is there any less opprobrious term that will justly characterise the offence ? Is it not to do that to the nation, which, if done to an individual, is acknowledged fraud ? Is it not by deceit, or subterfuge, or false statements, or hiding the truth, to withhold what belongs to others ? Does it not occasion suffering, and misery, and moral degradation among those engaged in it, like every other misconception or neglect of moral duty ? Hard as the expression may grate upon our ears,

¹ Matt. xvii. 27.


if we countenance the fraud, we are the authors of that misery; if we buy the fruits of it, we are accomplices in the crime. The fashion, that will stoop to purchase the glove and the silk, which has eluded the vigilance of the customs, is stooping to dishonesty; and is so much more criminal than the poor man transported for the crime, as it has not the temptation of want to plead in extenuation of its guilt.

Whatever has been fraudulently obtained, and by whatever means, if a man repent truly of his rapine or extortion, and would be at peace with God, let him make entire restitution of every thing, in which he is conscious of having wronged another. Such was the course of Zaccheus, when his Lord declared that salvation had come to his house: "He stood forth, and said, If I have done any wrong to any man—if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Be it a small matter, or a great; though it should seem to

wound character and reputation by acknowledging a dishonesty that has been concealed; though it should impoverish and bring you to want by taking away that on which is built your whole fortune; whatever may be the risk, whatever the cost, or penalty, restore every thing of which you have defrauded your fellow-creature. It is not enough to confess your sin to God, and ask pardon at his hands, unless you make to man also the reparation which is his due, and the utmost that is in your power. Rid yourself of the possession which seems to contaminate, and bring its curse on you and all you have. And, if those whom you have wronged are departed from this world,—if you can find neither children, nor relatives, nor heirs, to whom to make such atonement as you are able for the injustice inflicted upon parents, or kindred, or former proprietors,—restore that which is not yours to the first great proprietor of all things, to God, from whom alone all title to property was derived at the

beginning, and for his sake bestow it upon such works of charity or piety as will be most pleasing in his sight, and bewail your misfortune, that you should have deferred restitution to the right owner, until now you are incapable of making it.

Finally, to the improvident, Holy Scripture addresses beautiful lessons from the instinct of animals, and bids him go to the very insects and reptiles to learn his duty. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard! consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." In the season of plenty, the little insect lays up her store, and provides for a winter of scarcity and distress. And consider to what want, and wretchedness, — consider to what temptations and inducements to crime, he commits himself and all that depend on him, who does not strive to hoard up something for the day of necessity. When industry is of no avail, for there are none to employ it; when means are exhausted,



and there is no prospect of a fresh supply ; when children cry for bread, and there is none to give them ; then it is, that other considerations lose their weight, for existence itself seems to be at stake ; then it is, that character is in danger to be forfeited, and guilt incurred, to obtain sustenance by unworthy expedients ; then it is, that a rash step is taken, which proves irretrievable throughout an after life ; or a plunge is made headlong into offence, which involves all the happiness of this world in its penalties, and endangers the soul in the day of final judgment.

But yet once more, in vain does the good man labour to provide present sustenance, and to lay by for old age—in vain does he rise early to his toil, and let the shades of night close in upon his work—in vain does he renounce the riot, the revel, and wasteful indulgence—in vain does he collect his little savings, and curtail comforts, and eat the bread of carefulness, if the baser members of

society may defraud him of his stores, and the idle or improvident are allowed to consume the produce of his industry.

Nevertheless "have compassion one of another," and "never turn thy face from a poor man." "Render to all their dues."¹ While working for the things of this life, work out your salvation also in the life to come. Make to yourselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye die, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. So use the wealth of this world, that it shall make you rich in the world to come. How many a one lays up treasure for himself on earth alone, and saith to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry!" Happy in the enjoyments of time, he is careless of eternity. Pleased with the display of a few baubles, he is heedless of immortal glory in the heaven of heavens. A child playing with the trifles of his

¹ Rom. xiii. 7.

nursery, he thinks not of attaining perfect manhood, the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." He builds his fragile house, and the first passing breath destroys the glittering structure, and scatters the cards upon the ground. He feeds the grosser appetites of the material frame at the cost of those exalted blessings, to which he never elevates his thoughts, or directs his affections. "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; and then whose shall those things be?"

Let us, my brethren, so seek "the bread which perisheth," that the bread which came down from heaven, may nourish us unto life eternal. The worldly man is perhaps frank to confess, that the highwayman who strips the traveller, is no worse, than the sharper who strips his friend. "He that is stronger than another may rob him by violence; he that is more subtle may do it by cunning; but, if the injury in both cases is the same, must not the guilt be so too?" Let him carry

this a little farther. If ingratitude and neglect render not to God his due, is not this a species of robbery also? Is it not to rob his Maker of the service that he owes? Is it not to rob his Redeemer who has bought him at a price? Is it not to rob God of his honour, who hath made all things, and given us all things plenteously to enjoy? Is it not to rob the testator after his death, and his heirs of the goodly heritage bequeathed in his testament? We all are the executors of Christ, to guard for the children that shall come after us, his truth, his righteousness, the services of his holy religion, and the sacraments of his church. The Lord's Supper was the legacy specially bequeathed with his dying breath. And if we neglect our charge of it, we are indeed the guardians who betray the confidence reposed in us, and deprive future heirs of the inheritance of their heavenly Father.

SERMON X.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS, xx. 16.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy
neighbour.

IN this commandment are forbidden offences of the tongue against a neighbour, as in the third are those against God. In the explanation of the catechism I am "to hurt no body by word or deed ; to keep my tongue from evil-speaking, lying, and slandering." From evil-speaking : for, "Put them in mind to speak evil of no man," says St. Paul to Titus.¹ From lying : for, "Putting away

¹ Titus, iii. 2.

lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour.”¹ From slandering: for, “Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.”² And it is said in the commandment “against thy neighbour,” because all falsehood must injure some one. False evidence in favour of a culprit is against the public outraged by his crimes. Ananias and Sapphira “lied not unto men, but unto God;” yet their hypocrisy involved injustice to the early church. Theudas rose up, boasting himself to be somebody; and a number of men were led astray by him, and brought to nought. Elymas the sorcerer, a false prophet, sought to turn away the deputy from the faith.³ So that in truth, whether it be calumny or concealment, or self-conceit; whether it be in testimony, or teaching, or promises, or subornation of witnesses; in whatever mode you practise, under whatever veil you conceal

¹ Ephes. iv. 25. ² Exod. xxiii. 1. ³ Acts, xiii. 6.

falsehood, it must be an injustice, and doing an injury to your fellow-creatures.

Truth has been justly said to be the life, not of the body only, but also of the soul. And in accordance with this maxim, the apostle urges, as an incentive to speak truth, that "we are members one of another;"¹ assuming the fatal consequences of falsehood, and intimating, that, in this matter, we are so dependent upon each other, and so bound together in one body, as to render it impossible, that any part should be cut off without injury to the rest. We are members one of another, both as forming one mystical body in Christ, and constituting society at large. And whether we look on ourselves as the Communion of Saints under the Son of God, or regard our duties to each other, and the happiness of mankind, in every view of our relationship truth is essential to vital energy, and even to existence itself.

¹ Ephes. iv. 25.

First, as to the life of the soul in the mystical body of Christ. If our Lord was not true, where would be our salvation? If the Holy Ghost had not inspired the Evangelists with the truth, what would be the Gospel? If the Pharisees' bribe had suborned the chosen witnesses of the Redeemer's life and resurrection to disown their Master — if, to escape persecutions, torture, contempt, and death, they had even concealed what they saw, and heard, and the Spirit had inspired — what, my brethren, would have been your condition, and mine, at this hour? We should have been wrapped in the heathen darkness of those vast regions that have apostatised from the faith; in the gloom and superstition of the East, which was once the cradle of intelligence and religion to the West; or worshipping imagined deities, whom we invested with the vices and passions of ourselves, and perhaps offering up each other in sacrifice to the work of our own hands. And but little better must be the condition of most men,

if in these days the ministers and teachers of religion pervert the revealed word, and lead astray the flocks they ought to guide. So completely is our spiritual existence as Christians dependent upon truth.

And secondly, as we constitute human society. The Almighty has distinguished us from the unreasoning brute by the faculty of speech, that we may communicate one with another, and a man may know and use, not only what he has himself, but what others in almost all ages and countries have, discovered. If each had but his own thoughts and senses to depend upon, we should know little more than the brute beasts we despise. But we learn what others have said and written. After awhile, we may, a few of us, perhaps add one step of improvement ourselves. We impart to others what we know; and glean from them something in return. And so each subject is handed on from mind to mind, receiving correction and improvement as it proceeds, until it becomes of solid advantage to mankind, and

of common use in society. And in this is the vital action, the life itself, of intelligence. And so the soul in its worldly functions cannot live without truth. For, if falsehood intervenes in the course of these communications, the train is at once broken, the action of intellect is cut short, the inquirer searches in vain, if he searches at all, and knowledge with the disposition to obtain it are both together lost.

Again, character is so intimately connected with some virtues, as to seem almost essential to their practice, and is of no little import in maintaining the life of the body. But, if it is assailed by falsehood, though innocent it may be destroyed ; a barrier against vice is broken down ; despair seizes on the mind that had fortified itself in good opinion ; the sufferer rushes reckless into guilt that he had abhorred ; infamy and destitution await him in the world ; a soul is lost to the kingdom of God ; a desolate heart is broken ; and let him who has scattered

falsehood as sparks of fire, look unmoved, if he can, on the wreck of a moral being, whom he has destroyed, and for whose fall he must answer to the judge, who has said, "Woe unto him, by whom offences do come."

And as regards the body itself. Without truth between man and man the business and means of subsistence now circulated in the world must come to an end. If one could place no dependence on the word of another, all must soon come to the condition of beasts, each living for himself alone, and unconnected with the rest. Social life would become extinct. And so, to say the least, very many of those, whom a social system enables to live, must cease to exist altogether, and the earth must be more thinly peopled. And hence probably the disgrace of falsehood, and the indignation men feel at being reproached with it : it is an infamy that revolts against our nature, as social beings. It, as it were, outlaws us from the great human compact ;

so that it is not only against the laws of Christ, but also against those of human nature and existence.

The ninth commandment is intimately connected with every other, through that denial of the truth, which usually succeeds the commission of sin. Thus it is men hope to deceive each other by plunging deeper into guilt, though they know they cannot deceive God. Thus it is, when they have escaped human censure they deceive their own hearts, and cry to the soul, Peace, when there is no peace. Thus it is they put down the rebukes of conscience, and the warning voice of the Holy Spirit; and love not the light, because their deeds are evil. But if the martyrs of the cross had so denied the truth that condemned them, where had been now our hopes, our faith, or knowledge of salvation?

Evidence given on oath involves obedience to the third, as well as the ninth commandment. The false-witness invokes the sacred name of the Almighty

to attest his falsehood : and the Almighty is at his right hand. If he hides what he is sworn to reveal, he cannot hide his own sin : if he confounds and equivocates, he is trifling with the King of kings : if he affirms what is false, the blood of the innocent shall be upon his head.

Private evidence, if I may so term tale-bearing, is forbidden in Scripture : evidence before a public magistrate is sanctioned by our Lord's own example. When the high-priest adjured him by the living God to tell whether he were the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus answered him, "Thou hast said." But to pervert the truth, to hide facts with false colourings and glosses, to turn "judgment into gall," and the "fruit of righteousness into hemlock," is to defeat the whole end of society, and to offend at once against the sums of both tables of the law. It is neither to love God, for you dishonour his name that you adjure ; nor to love your neighbour, for you wrong him by falsehood. It is to banish security, and

render up the innocent a prey to the wicked. It is to put all that can render life of value at the mercy of those who regard not justice. The witness in his testimony, the juryman in his verdict, and the judge in his sentence, are alike responsible for the public happiness : responsible in the dearest interests of themselves, as well as others : for character, property, and life itself. By them the weak are to be guarded against the oppression of the strong. By them the rich are to be secured against the pilfering of the poor. By their firmness is to be repressed the violence of the aggressor. By their fidelity is to be relieved the suffering of the patient.

These are duties, which, more or less, every citizen is called on to perform ; and every human being has an interest in the faithful discharge of them. It is your own coffer, your own fair name, your own family, your own happiness depends on the inviolability of truth committed to your charge. It is because

every one is concerned in it, that truth is committed to the keeping of all. If a spirit of hostility accompany you to a court of justice, to exaggerate an offence; if a spirit of party sit beside you in the jury-box, to blind the understanding with prejudice; if passion, malice, or covetousness interpose, to condemn the innocent, or screen the guilty; it is not the rest of society only that will suffer: the offence will recoil upon the offender, and the falsehood upon you who have been false: your use of evil means will warrant their being used against yourself: as you take life, your life will likewise be taken: and once more the spirit of that maxim shall be found fulfilled: "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

This is the lesson taught us in the sentence of Ahab and Jezebel. What private citizen is so likely to escape in this world a just retribution of the crime, as he who then governed Israel, and his wife, who wrote letters in his name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent them

to the nobles and elders, and they obeyed her! Picture to yourself a tribunal, hardened, relentless, prejudiced by some favourite pursuit, or selling judgment for gain. Conceive yourself arraigned with all the mock solemnity of pleadings, that you know are vain, and appeals, that you are conscious will not avail: your sentence long since determined; your sacrifice, and that of justice, offered together to the Mammon of unrighteousness. Why prolong a trial that avarice has already judged? Why listen to evidence, when passion has already condemned? Why summon witnesses, when the gold in the grasp, or the malice in the heart, has forestalled the truth, and blinded the understanding? Jezebel, covetous of your vineyard, has set two men, sons of Belial to bear witness against you in the presence of the people. You are already condemned; and will soon be stoned, that you die. And Jezebel saith to Ahab, "Arise, take

possession of the vineyard, which he refused to give thee for money ; for he is dead." And it shall not want another Elijah to rise up, and speak to the perjured, and the suborner of perjury : it shall not need a prophet to announce to the false-witness, and the unjust judge, "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine."

Turn again to that other tribunal, where Pilate takes water, and washes his hands, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person ; I find no fault in him." The traitor is by, who has sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. The false-witnesses are there, who testify that Jesus said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." The Scribes and Pharisees, and all the people are at hand to answer, "His blood be on us, and on our children!" And they lead away the Son of Man to crucify him. But there is one who

repents already, when he sees the guiltless condemned. The sting of remorse is already in his breast, and maddens his heart. See the inward struggles of self-reproach and self-conviction. See ! he brings the thirty pieces of silver, saying, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." See the bribe, the price of blood, thrown down in the temple. And the relentless priests and elders reply, "What is that to us ? see thou to that." And the sight is more than the wretch can bear : he goes out the self-avenger of his own crime : and executes upon himself the death to which he had betrayed another. And his hardened accomplices will ere long be calling on the mountains to fall on them, and the deep to swallow them up ; when the abomination of desolation shall stand in their holy place ; and there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world ; and their home shall be left unto them desolate.

"Thou shalt not go up and down as a

tale-bearer among thy people.”¹ “He that covereth a transgression seeketh love: but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.”² “Where there is no tale-bearer, the strife ceaseth.”³ Of all injuries perhaps slander is that, in which it is most difficult to find a place for repentance. “Who steals my purse, steals trash;” which was mine, and is his, and soon will be another’s. He may restore it, or I may get more. But he who robs me of my good name, takes what can do him no good, and leaves me poor indeed. Who can give it me back? And without it whose friendship can I cultivate? whose help can I ask? whose regard can I expect? “Behold; how great a matter a little fire kindleth?” and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. “Judge not then,” saith our Lord; “that ye be not judged.” “Why beholdest thou the mote in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam, that is in thine

¹ Levit. xix. 16.

² Prov. xvii. 9.

³ Prov. xxvi. 20.

own eye?" "If any man seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, that man's religion is vain."

The snake is concealed in the grass, and his lip is poisoned. Nay! perhaps you have nourished him in your own bosom; and he secretly wounds the hand that feeds him. The sufferer casts his suspicions where they were little deserved; and retaliates on the innocent, who had not provoked him. New retaliations, and fresh injuries follow. Character is assailed; good name questioned, or destroyed; and ruin possibly ensues. And will the slanderer leave his hiding-place, come forth from his secrecy, avow his part, and exonerate the guiltless from unfounded imputations? The reptile rather shelters himself in his hole, lest he should be trampled upon; until another opportunity of putting forth his venom.

It is not the good man, exposing vice that he may effect its cure, but the bad, pandering to evil affections, who inflicts this outrage upon society. It is the idle,

who can find no better gratification, than the indulgence of his spleen. It is the corrupt, who thus feeds his own, and other men's passions. It is the designing, who thus hopes to bring down the objects of his envy to a level with himself. A neighbour's prosperity stings the prodigal with compunction. His evil eye smarts at the sight of well-earned comforts, the fruits of frugal industry. The happy fireside, the laughing child, the hospitable board, are so many thorns in the side of the soured and malignant beggar, who has wasted his goods in idleness, and his health in dissipation. And he racks the chambers of his heart to invent means—to raise himself to equal prosperity and happiness?—No! no!—To destroy those honest joys, and blast the good name, that contrasts so bitterly with his own: to ruin that man's character: to say that he has gained his little competence unfairly: and perhaps in more subtle malice to insinuate his own friendship, or disappointment, or regret; that his slan-

der may be less suspected, and the character he wrongs be brought more surely to a level with his own. He darkly hints, that there is something worse behind; which, thank Heaven, has not reached the public ear. His base heart leaps with joy at every repetition of the tale. His victim's credit is destroyed. Neighbours are afraid to trust or deal with him. And the slanderer feeds the gale in secret, and perhaps visits him in mock condolence, and under a pretence of friendship gets access to his private affairs, and obtains new means of inflicting injury. And now he exults that the bread is taken from the children's mouth; that peace has been expelled the parents' bosom; that beggary and reproach stare them in the face; and perhaps virtue is pulled down from her citadel of reputation, in which she had intrenched herself.

And how should the greedy listeners have anticipated such a catastrophe? How should they have thought that false, which every one said? They never would

have repeated it, could they have foreseen the result ?

But who made them judges of another man's servant ? Why did they look abroad for faults, instead of examining at home, where was much more room for scrutiny ; and so see the mote in a brother's eye, and not consider the beam that was in their own ?

Calumny may be distinguished from evil-speaking by understanding the one to denote a reproach invented and disseminated by wilful falsehood, and the other a relation only of what we believe to be true. In both there may be malice ; in both there may be the plea, that the mention of a tale was inconsiderate, and without design of injury ; both may be used to excite suspicions, to kindle or protract disputes, to convert the favour of a friend into dislike, or to render a man contemptible and loathsome in public opinion ; but in one there is always the untruth to aggravate the guilt, and so far to make the offence more revolting than in

the other. Not that either can be innocent: for, whether by invented falsehood, or by promulgation of a truth which charity might conceal,—whether with deliberate purpose to defame, or with idle stories of thoughtless gossip, if we wound a neighbour's reputation, we inflict an irreparable injury, and in a manner forbidden alike by the particular precepts, and by the whole spirit of the Gospel. “Judge not, that ye be not judged,” says our Lord,¹ associating the precept with an expostulation against quick-sighted discernment of another's faults, and blind indifference to our own. “But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ,” says St. Paul with reference to another case, in which there was no question of facts. “Speak not evil one of another,” says St. James,² reiterating what is enjoined in the Epistle to the Ephesians.³

¹ Matt. vii. 1.² c. iv. 11.³ c. iv. 31.

And St. Peter sets forth the true temper of a Christian with the true motive of his carefulness not to injure his fellow: "Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisy, and envies, and all evil-speaking, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."¹ It is not when we mention what we believe to be true, to the party himself concerned, that he may be admonished, or reclaimed, or we may be better informed of its truth:—it is not when we warn others of danger in their intercourse with bad men, if we have good evidence of their being bad:—it is not when we give information, or arraign a criminal, to promote the ends of public justice, that guilt is incurred: but it is in what has been termed private evidence, in the babbling and tell-tale loquacity of those who pander to curiosity or malevolence; in the cruel charges and

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 1.

aspersions that are scattered from house to house, and chamber to chamber, throughout the common walks of society; in the wound by an unavowed calumniator, and the secret stab that cannot be parried. These are what stir human indignation, and these are what constitute offence in the sight of God. These have at once all the baseness of treachery, and the unpitying malignity of hatred: for, "the words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down to the innermost parts of the belly."¹

One method of assailing character is properly termed detraction. When a man's life is so exemplary, that malice itself is afraid to impute vices, lest its malignity should be betrayed, and the reproach recoil on the slanderer, detraction ventures to throw discredit on a high reputation, to doubt if there is real worth, or at least if it has not been exaggerated, to find discreditable motives,

¹ Prov. xviii. 8.

and by a thousand stratagems to pull down a good name from the eminence it has obtained. When others bestow a due commendation, the detractor endeavours to diminish or curtail, though he dare not altogether refuse it. True, he says, such a man is wise and prudent ; but it is for his own ends. Another is charitable ; but, if you did not proclaim his good works, he would himself. A third is pious and devout ; but were ever such perverted sentiments, and affectation of sanctity ? And so a good man is lowered in general esteem, and flaws are discovered in his character, though he is too well fenced about with virtues, to stand in danger of disgrace. And he who is forward to detract from excellence, seldom fails to betray envy, or some malevolence lurking in himself.

Others, from different motives, sometimes traduce and defame themselves. They conceal the graces with which they are endowed, and assume vices of which they are not guilty ; sometimes out of

hope of reward, if they think that which is in itself a crime, will be accepted as a service, as the Amalekite, expecting a recompense from David for slaying an enemy, asserted that he killed Saul, who had fallen on his own sword ; sometimes out of impious vain-glory, boasting of excesses which they never committed, that, in the society of the dissipated, they may gain credit for daring or success in licentiousness ; sometimes out of unwillingness to undertake an enterprise for which talents render them qualified, as Moses pleaded that he was slow of speech, being loth to encounter the danger of bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt ; and sometimes out of dissembled humility, when they hope to make self-detraction a bait for commendation, and by a pretence of refusing, to obtain the higher praise. This last is a common device of the self-conceited, of whom it has been well said, that though they cannot endure to be contradicted in any thing else, they would be very

sorry to have you yield to them in this.

Another offence against the ninth commandment is by open reviling and reproaches, by bitter taunts, or sarcastic scoffing. These are immediate incitements to anger and revenge, and so the Apostle speaks of evil-speaking in company with irritated affections. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you."¹ And our Lord himself classes the same vices together: "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: but whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council."² And so this violence of the tongue seems to offend against the sixth as well as the ninth commandment, as in the paraphrase of the Church Catechism it is said, "Thou shalt hurt nobody by word or deed."

¹ Ephes. iv. 31.

² Matt. v. 22.

Another offence, as dangerous as subtle, is to involve ourselves in rash promises, which it may cost guilt or the risk of strong temptation to fulfil. Thus the Jews bound themselves in a malicious vow, not to eat or drink until they had slain Paul. Thus Herod promised with an oath to give the damsel whatever she would ask for ; and unwillingly, for his oath's sake, became the murderer of John the Baptist. In a moment of passion, we bind ourselves to vows, which cannot, without shame, be recalled, or, without injustice be fulfilled. Sentiments of honour and probity urge us not to recede : unhappiness or guilt forbid us to advance. The time is arrived that we must act ; and we find ourselves on the horns of a dilemma, that will wound reputation, or peace of mind for ever. Jephthah promises the sacrifice of " whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of his house to meet him, when he returns in peace from the children of Ammon : " and behold ! his daughter comes out to meet

him with timbrels and dances. And she is his only child : beside her he has neither son nor daughter. And when he sees her, he rends his clothes and says, Alas ! my daughter, thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me : for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back. And she says to him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which proceeded out of thy mouth. And he did with her according to the vow which he had vowed. And the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.”¹

Christians too sometimes enter into engagements, and form ties, that prove the sacrifice of others, if not of themselves. They do not indeed now slay with the knife, and burn with the fire. But they destroy happiness and charac-

¹ Judges, xi. 34.

ter, that is dearer than life: they consume the soul, and those hopes and graces of the Gospel, that adorn it more than any earthly tenement, and are more precious to it than any perishable habitation. And perhaps, as they advance in years, they feel the galling yoke of promises, which early imprudence has made. A better reason has been restored, and they would gladly shake it off. But they are encompassed in the trammels of youthful follies; or the cords of vice hold every effort in constraint. They cannot escape without a penalty; and that penalty they have not the courage to incur.

Finally, my brethren, hurt nobody by word any more than deed: keep your tongues from evil-speaking, lying, and slandering. And to do this, avoid that vehemence of party-spirit which begets prejudice, and represents those who differ from you as actuated by bad motives. It is difficult to esteem a man whose judgment contradicts our determined pre-

possessions; for we think our principle of action is good, and so that every one opposed to it is bad. Party-spirit makes us forget that we, as well as others, are seldom free from error; we become exasperated by opposition; and thus our minds are prepared to receive and circulate calumny. In the present day harsh and uncharitable constructions are interchanged between members of our own Church; each party exaggerates or invents rumours to degrade the other in public estimation; each is assailed by the envenomed heart and tongue of its opponent; and between both truth suffers, and fellowship is lost. And so those who profess, and sincerely profess, a desire to promote and enlarge the kingdom of Christ, are led by differences and animosities to effect much that will destroy it.

A Christian would do better to reflect more upon his own miscarriages, and make it a rule, when he hears of any sin committed by another, to examine his

own life, and see how near he may have approached the precipice over which his neighbour has fallen. Shame for his own errors will then serve as a covering for those of his brother : he will occupy himself with his own affairs, instead of being busy with other men's ; he will be more slow to listen to slander against others, because he makes that the occasion of self-reproach ; and he will not be so engrossed with self-love, as to be pained at hearing another praised.

Abstain, then, from calumny, reproaches, and detraction, for the sake of Christ's Church, and the peace of it ; for the sake of your brethren, who might be discouraged or exasperated ; and for the sake of yourselves, who may be reviled and slandered in your turn, and so maddened into malice and hatred. Curb that little member, which is so powerful to evil, that it has been said to defile the whole body ; and which may be powerful to good, as our communications are good and charitable one to another. " Behold,

we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us ; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which, though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governour listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things." " And every kind of beasts, and birds, and serpents, is tamed, and hath been tamed of man." But an unruly tongue can no man tame. The venom of the serpent may be extracted, the jaws of the lion may be disarmed, and the tigress may be reclaimed from her fierce nature ; but the tale-bearer and slanderer no precaution can deprive of his weapons, no care can subdue, and no kindness can win, to lay aside his malignity. " Who, then, is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you ? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom."

SERMON XI.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.

Exodus, xx. 17.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his.

In the tenth commandment, as if to crown those that forbid sinful actions, desires which instigate to crime become the subject of consideration. The best means to prevent the commission of sin is to avoid the conception of it in the heart; and to deter us from the perpetration of evil, the Almighty has seen fit to prohibit evil concupiscence. To suppose that desires are indomitable,—to imagine that men cannot reduce them to subserviency, and by resolute and perse-

vering discipline confine them within the rules of virtue and religion, is to impute to the Christian a feebleness, with which, through God's mercy, he is not afflicted. The very fact, that God commands him not to covet, is an evidence of the control he can exercise over his thoughts, and the affections of his heart: for the Almighty does not trifle, and order that which cannot be performed; the legislation of heaven is not futile, to enact that which cannot be obeyed. It may not, in many cases, be an act of simple volition. It may cost an arduous and protracted struggle, to overcome what has grown upon indulgence, and fortified itself in habit. Images and longings rise unbidden in the breast, that has long been their accustomed seat. Yet constraint will extirpate them in the end; and vigilance will eventually close the door against evil, even in the most retired chambers of a man's heart. Of his own strength indeed he can do nothing. But by the aid of that blessed Spirit, who first

inspires the thoughts of a holy self-constraint,—by the Grace of that Comforter, who supplies his Saviour's place on earth, he may so regulate his affections and lusts, as that they may be found consistent with his Christian profession, and become barriers against transgression, rather than incitements to transgress. Those cravings, which, when habituated to evil, were impervious to good, when righteousness becomes the habit, equally resist the approach of unholiness. Get thee hence, Satan, they cry spontaneously to the tempter, who shews them all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. The advances of the arch-enemy are met by a new resistance. New angels come to sustain, and minister strength. Another power is never wanting to those who seek it. “Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Nay! your very disposition to ask, your very anxiety to seek, your very earnestness with which you knock aloud for the Grace of Christ,

and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, is the best evidence that Grace has been already imparted, and that the Spirit is already abiding with you. You take the kingdom of God by violence, because the kingdom of God is already in your heart.

- Sinful desire seems to be a portion of that inherent corruption of nature, which has been entailed on all mankind from the fall of our first parents. If we trace its progress in the mind, its first motions seem to be with the imagination, which conceives the idea of sinful action, at first perhaps vague and undefined, and without exact lineaments and features. But a sensual or worldly disposition soon dwells with complacency on these indications of an evil tendency ; a natural sympathy betrays itself between human affections, and the fruit of human fancy ; a prospect of pleasure, and therefore actual gratification ensues ; and then follows assent and approbation. It is true, that conscience may step in, and strike a note

of alarm ; and the understanding may discern, that the sin which has been conceived is contrary to the law of God ; and if that warning conscience is heeded, and that discernment of the understanding not despised, the course of evil within will be cut short, and sin repressed. But often the affections and passions interpose, to corrupt the judgment with promises of delight, or profit, or honour ; and that which was at first but a vague idea, having obtained the deliberate sanction of the will, is reduced into a plan specific, and defined, and practical, and becomes a wilful sin fully formed and resolved upon in the inner man, and waiting only for an opportunity to be committed in outward action.

If a man's desires stir him to contrive means of obtaining that, which by right he should not have, they are sinful. There are some things, which he never can innocently possess, or innocently wish for. Such is a slave, in whom property can be established only by oppres-

sion, or, as the commandment specifies, the wife, who is a neighbour's, and whom a neighbour cannot transfer to his fellow. There are other things which may be innocently obtained : and in this case the guilt lies only in the excess of the passion, or the means taken to gratify it. Property may be purchased by lawful sale, if the possessor is willing to part with it : equally may it be desired, and the desire of it will be guiltless. Nay ! if the heart pants after wealth, for purposes of real beneficence and charity, not for selfish aggrandisement or indulgence, heaven itself will smile upon that generous aspiration. But to obtain by extortion, what is withheld on the terms of honest contract, is an offence against God and man : and equally so is the desire unrepressed when honest means prove unavailing to get possession. If it will not submit to restraint of law ; if it will contrive how to overleap impediments, which equity has put in the way ; if it will prompt to false representation, stratagem, fraud, or op-

pression, it is the moral upas, dropping poison from every leaf and branch, and calls for Christian rigour, to cut it down, and eradicate it from the heart. Ahab coveted the vineyard of Naboth. If his longings had prompted only lawful means of acquiring it; if Naboth had consented to transfer its possession; if Ahab had subdued his affection, when the object of it was denied him; if he had refused to satisfy his wishes by the foul means, that had been employed; no prophet would have arisen to condemn his crime, and pronounce his dreadful sentence. But when the vehemence of desire led him to compass the possession of what he coveted, he cared not how; when he became discontented at denial, and "laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread;" when, after Jezebel had murdered the rightful possessor, "he rose up, and went down to take possession of the vineyard;" then the result proved his desires to have been inordinate: the event told aloud, that he

had coveted as God has forbidden : and, as he coveted in sin, so was he held to be an accomplice in the crime that Jezebel committed, and became a participator in the punishment that Jezebel suffered.

“ From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit : all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.”¹ When the Almighty overwhelmed the world with the flood, it was because “ he saw, that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination,” and purpose, and desire, (as is signified in the original) “ of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually.”² “ As he thinketh in his heart, so he is,” says Solomon of the dissembler.³ Outward actions are not always an index to the disposition within. Isaiah⁴ tells us of men who drew nigh to God with their lips, but their heart was far

¹ Mark, vii. 21.

² Gen. vi. 5.

³ Prov. xxiii. 7.

⁴ Isa. xxix. 13.

him. In an artificial state of society the exterior is often very different from the inner man. Nature is subdued, and veiled in so many fictions, that he who is most depraved, often glitters for a while in the outward garb of holiness. But it is the heart, as the seat of the affections, which is the fountain of vice and virtue, the incentive, and first spring to moral action. It is what we love, what we desire, and what we hope for, that stirs all our energies into activity, and is the object of all our efforts. The affection itself, the longing, and the aspiration, constitute the character of a man for godliness, or irreligion. Well-grounded fears or idle superstitions may exercise an influence on outward conduct; but, if the disposition remains unaltered, they can never render their victim more acceptable in the sight of God. "Blessed are the pure in heart," is the lesson of our Saviour. The malignant, who would inflict an injury but for his fear of punishment or retaliation, can hardly be the

better, because he is timid or pusillanimous. The wicked, deterred from crime only by apprehensions of his priest or the confessional, can hardly be more worthy of the divine favour, because he is degraded by superstition. Impotent old age, that regrets to lose the excesses of earlier years, can hardly be more innocent, than youth which gives the rein to impetuous passion and importunate appetite. And so, if we may do no murder, neither may we wish harm or death to befall any man : if we may not commit adultery, neither may we look on a woman to lust after her : if we may not steal, neither may we covet any thing that is a neighbour's.

Desire has the privilege of secrecy, and so of freedom from all constraint, but that which a man imposes on himself. Let him then examine his own heart, and discover for himself the object of his affections. The secret longing of his chamber,—the wish of the silent midnight hour, when darkness shuts him out

from the world,—is it for more holiness? for more fervent piety, and devotion of spirit? for more opportunities of doing, and of being, good? for more intimate intercourse with God? and that his kingdom may truly come upon earth? or is it for more wealth?—for more glitter and dazzling pomp?—for more of the pleasures of self-indulgence, or the frivolities of pride? if he discharges a duty, does he discharge it gladly? if he has neglected one, has it been against his will? if he transgresses, has it been with pain? if he is lowly, and of small estate, is he content with the necessities, and not greedy of the luxuries of life? Alas! how often is it all the other way! Duty is a matter of constraint and obligation. Omission is indulgence. Transgression is engaged in because it promises enjoyment. And when the allurements of a sinful pleasure or gain flit before us, our desires reach out after it, though the hand dare not catch hold. And the faithful monitor within, if thus consulted, will tell too

many of us, that we do covet a neighbour's house, or wife, or property, or perhaps every thing that he has, except what alone we ought to desire, a participation in the gifts and graces, which it has pleased God to bestow upon him through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Wherefore, when one of the company said to our Lord, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me," that divine teacher answered unto them; "Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."¹ And the Apostle terms the sin idolatry; because it absorbs every faculty of the soul; it engrosses every aspiration; and the worshippers of Mammon are devout indeed to their one unrivalled god of this world. "Be content with what you have," he adds: and, "having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." And in this spirit

¹ Luke, xii. 15.

the Church Catechism explains the duty enjoined by the commandment, "Not to covet or desire other men's goods; but to learn and labour truly to get mine own living, and to do my duty in that state of life, unto which it shall please God to call me." "The love of money," says the Apostle again, "is the root of all evil."¹ "But godliness with contentment is great gain."

But is this the lesson inculcated in the world? If we look around on the multitudes that throng this vast city, what is the first, the general, the all-engrossing impulse, that actuates life, and invigorates energy? Is it not a thirst of gain unsatisfied, and insatiable? In some, necessity is its source; in some, avarice; in some, prodigality; in some, ambition; and in some happily, to judge from the fruits of their benevolence, a Christian love is the pure fountain, from which a desire of wealth as pure, is flowing. But

¹ 1 Tim. vi 10.

every man is eager to increase his store. Every man is in some manner, his neighbour's competitor. Every man is his neighbour's rival in the station and influence wealth bestows. Every man encounters temptation to prey upon his fellows. And his is a strong mind, which does not, whatever may be his position in life, meet many things, that he earnestly longs for, and cannot have. Many never know another desire, than to fill a chest with money, or add another manor to an estate. Many regard the talent to acquire wealth, as the supreme virtue; and weigh every faculty in a golden scale. Others confine their sordid ambition to a gorgeous display; and are content, if they can excel in splendour of abode, and equipage, and apparel. Others, again, make no scruple to wring profit from the necessities of the distressed; and sport with human misery. Few, very few, in the long catalogue of eager competitors, have a higher ambition than their own worldly advantage. Every one enters

in the race ; and few with any other thought than self, or any other object than that self may win. All “do it to obtain a corruptible crown ;” but how few “an incorruptible.”¹

In this is the root of evil, that costs us all so dear. Hence we covet ; and contrive plans, and devise means to gratify covetousness. First endeavours are disappointed ; and we go on to new exertions with no better success, or, if we do succeed, with no better hope of satisfying a greedy appetite. Then we resort to more subtle, and perhaps less honest, means. Scruples are gradually laid aside. Principle is by degrees worn out with chafing against ambition. Fraud, or pilfering oppression, or dishonesty, according to the station and opportunities, ensue : or, if they do not ensue, it is but the fear of human consequences, that deters from them. New Jezebels, and other Ahabs in heart conceive, what they

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 15.

dare not execute with the hand. Another Ananias and Sapphira cloak their covetousness with the pure robes of a Christian profession, and inwardly lie to the Holy Ghost. Other rich men take the poor man's lamb, that had been unto him as a daughter. Beneath the clothing of the flock of Christ, other hungry wolves hunt down and devour the traveller in the rugged paths of a famished land. But amid them all, not one Zaccheus to stand forth, and say, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have done any wrong to any man, I restore him fourfold."

Such is man's infirmity, that in giving himself up to the pursuits of the world, he loses hold of the checks and safeguards provided for those who are in pursuit of heaven. Such is the evil principle clinging to him: so that he cannot serve God and Mammon. "Every man is tempted," says St. James,¹ "when he

¹ James, i. 14.

is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust" (or desire) "hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth unto death. Do not err, my beloved brethren."

- Do not let immoderate cravings proceed to evil resolutions, designs, and endeavours: but curb, and put down your appetites; and, if you can, destroy that evil seed, which will spring up, and produce tares amid the wheat of the field that you have tended with your choicest culture.

High and low, rich and poor, a promiscuous multitude urge one another forward toward the same goal; which few can ever reach, and yet fewer can seek unsoiled by the dirt, and untrapped by the snares, that lie in the way. In vain does experience every day give warning of the risk. Crowds are standing on the brink of the precipice: the danger is imminent: all cannot escape: it is fearful to contemplate how many may fall: yet the throng behind con-

tinues to thrust them on. "Why take ye thought for raiment," inquires the Gospel: but the glory of Solomon has more admirers than the lilies of the field. "Take no thought for the morrow," says Christ: but, "Soul, thou hast many good things laid up for many years" is the dearer language of the Christian. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," saith our Lord: seek wealth, and power, and distinction, whispers the anxious parent almost over the cradle: and the infant lisps his earliest prayer to Mammon more earnestly than to the Almighty. Presently friends point out the success of frugal industry. Ambition tells him he must have wealth, to mount up to honour. Prudence bids him amass, what will support old age with dignity. Pride prompts him to display his splendour. Hoarding avarice accumulates a store for a detested heir. The tempter sits upon the death-bed, to turn a lingering hope from heaven to earth. And even on the grave rests a pompous

monument of worldly distinctions; and the epitaph recounts the stratagems and struggles, by which the departed climbed the steps to fortune, rather than the hopes he entertained of ascending to eternal glory. Every stage of life presents the delusive objects that the world covets. Every circumstance, and friend, and inward passion, combine to establish a false estimate of human worth, and human happiness.

The vice specifically forbidden in the tenth commandment is the desire of having that which belongs to another: the virtue enjoined is contentment, to which the pursuit of an honest calling is subsidiary, and with the generality of mankind essential. Discontent is the offspring of pride, when we think that the Almighty does not bestow on us what we deserve, or what he bestows on others no more deserving than ourselves. Men are apt to measure their deserts by their desires, and, as the latter are insatiable, their estimate of the former becomes ex-

travagant ; they lose sight of the bounties they receive, in contemplating those, of which they deem themselves deprived ; and instead of thanking God for his mercies, they complain that they are disappointed of their expectations. They continually compare themselves with a neighbour who has some supposed advantage over them, and forget the thousands whose lot is more unhappy in this world. They repine at the luxuries of a rich man's repast, and never stop to inquire how many starving souls would be glad of the crumbs that fall from their table. But, if they had the humility to form a little lower estimate of their own deserts ; if they would set the blessings they enjoy beside the deprivations which others suffer ; if they would not allow the things of this life to hold the highest place in their affections, but fix their best hopes and desires on a life to come : then they would " learn, in whatever state they were, therewith to be content ;" and perhaps deem a great abundance of

earthly possessions to be a clog only and an hindrance in their progress to a better country.

Consider him, who gave himself to be our example and pattern, the Saviour, whose whole life was a type to prefigure the only true object of Christian ambition. A strange human glory was the harbinger of the divine. Jesus in triumph entered the earthly, as he was thereafter to enter the heavenly Jerusalem. And the multitude cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way, and cried, saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." But where is the king, who is thus crowned with the shadow of his future grandeur? Where is his wealth, and pomp, and magnificence, and luxury? Shame on a world worshipping the Mammon of unrighteousness! "Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." Poor and humble, from the day that he was first

born in a stable, until that in which he died upon a malefactor's cross.

But are we in that ample retinue, which loudly greets his coming to Jerusalem? Alas! the meek and humble Jesus is going to be condemned. Like the proud and worldly-minded Jew, we would not a king so lowly, and naked, and who hath not where to lay his head. We follow that fickle and deluded multitude, which to-day is shouting applause and benedictions, to-morrow will condemn him to the cross, and heap curses on his head. If the lips do the homage of a subject, the life denies him in its pursuits, the heart denies him in its desires. Whither are we going, my brethren? We condemn him every day, by despising the poverty that was his. We pronounce him wrong, by pursuing the riches that he would not pursue. He gave his life for sin as an evil past endurance. But we can bear that; and give our lives rather to the attainment of wealth, which is often sinful. To be

poor as he was,—to be content with little, like the Lord Christ,—that is what we feel to be insufferable, and that is what condemns the Saviour Jesus.

But do you, whose treasure is sincerely in heaven,—do you learn to love the poverty of your Lord? Who indeed is not poor in the world? One in health, another in gold; one in honours, another in talent; one in friends, another in reputation; one in the disposition to enjoy, another in the faith that enjoyment will be eternal; all the world is poor. It is poor in every thing but hopes. And hence all are coveting: and all who covet are poor. But if they would learn to love the poverty of Christ in his first triumph, they would be more meet to enter with him into his second glory. They would covet less: and, like him, though poor, they would make many rich.

Be therefore content with the station, which it has pleased Providence to allot you. Look not with so much disdain on

that lowliness and humility, which gives a resemblance to your Lord. Of that wealth which you possess, give to those who need. And the treasure which you covet, let it be such as you may share with the King of kings. That when with what you have in this world you have done all which can be done to promote his peace on earth, in the full ovation of your heart you may enter with him into his joy in heaven.

N O T E.

THE KONDS.

THE following account of savage tribes, with whom intercourse has of late years been opened in the East Indies, is collected from the notes of an officer, who was employed in the territory they occupy.

In 1835 and 1836, when British forces advanced into Goomsur, and pursued the Rajah into the hill-fastnesses of his tributaries, a region hitherto unexplored was opened to investigation on the confines of the Presidencies of Madras and Bengal, about the lat. of 20° N. and long. of 84° E., on the western boundary of South Cuttack and Ganjam. Although the whole line of coast has been occupied for more than half a century by British garrisons and large civil and judicial establishments, the ad-

jacent interior was little known before this invasion, and years must yet elapse before it can be thoroughly examined. A people generally designated Konds are scattered over a tract of country covered with dense forests and jungle, and intersected by ranges of mountain. The state of their language at once marks their barbarous condition; for like that of the North American Indian, it has no written character. They are said to have been the original occupants of the fertile plains between the hills of Ganjam and the sea, before the coming of the Hindoos; but it is impossible to trace to an authentic source the claims upon remote antiquity which barbarous tribes usually prefer.

Their superstitions, and enormities which have obtained the sanction of common practice among them, convey a frightful idea of the condition, to which human beings and human society may be reduced, when they have lost all knowledge of the true God, and have no revelation of his will to guide their conduct. The sense of morality which prevails, if sense of morality it may be called, permits parents to put their children to death, without compunction, without any motive of superstition, or observance of religious ceremony, as a mere matter of worldly prudence and expediency.

The destruction of female infants prevails to an extent that has nowhere been surpassed, if it has been ever equalled, throughout the world. Sir John Malcolm in his *Central India*¹ says: "Infanticide is not known among the lower classes. This shocking custom appears limited to some Rajpoot chiefs of high rank and small fortunes, who, from despair of obtaining a suitable marriage for their daughters, are led by an infatuated pride to become the destroyers of their own offspring." In a tone equally sedative, and consolatory to the excited feelings of humanity, he repeats in the *political History of India*:² "Infanticide is held in as great horror by all, but a few families of Hindoos, as by us." And these remarks probably coincide with the former circumstances of the practice in the neighbourhood of Benares; but are utterly inapplicable to the savage tribes in the province of Orissa. Of the Konds all ranks and conditions were in the habit of putting their female children to death. When their villages were first visited, the natives ran out to gaze at the strangers, and often formed groups of fifteen, twenty, or more male, with but one or two female children; and on

¹ Vol. ii. p. 208.

² Vol. ii. p. 285.

further investigation, the number of the latter was sometimes found yet less in comparison with the former. There is no religious obligation to perpetrate the crime; the will of the father is the arbitrator of life and death; and he is usually actuated by the sole consideration of the means he has to support his offspring. But it is rare to find more than one daughter in a family. The first-born, though not a son, may be preserved, because the parents are not sure of further progeny; but very frequently every female infant is destroyed.

The practice is acknowledged without hesitation, and the reason given for it by the people is, that they are unable to maintain women, who cannot work in the fields, or take part in war, or in the chase. The infant is put to death soon after birth, usually by being thrown into the nearest ravine, where she is devoured by vultures and jackals. If the little innocent is allowed to live for a few weeks, she escapes this more than brutal exposure. But yet she is not safe. The parent assumes, that he may do what he pleases with his own children; and, in the exercise of this prerogative, sometimes sells his daughter at a more advanced age of childhood, to be bred up a victim for human sacrifice.

The result is, that the female population falls far short of the male, and wives are sought from other tribes and countries. The bride is sometimes purchased, and sometimes carried off by force. She is taken from among a people who cherish infancy with natural tenderness: she has been brought up in habits that do not quench all natural affection: and the violation of a mother's feelings in the destruction of her progeny must be a greater cruelty to her, than to the infant who is exposed. The very beasts and birds, that tear the little limbs, and devour the body of her child, exhibit the force of natural attachment operating as an instinct upon the tigress in her lair, and the pelican tearing her breast for her brood. If there is an affection planted by nature in the heart—if there is a passionate fondness that burns unbidden in the human breast—if there is a duty indicated by all that love can prompt, and all that pity can plead—it is a mother's love for her own offspring. In savage man there is not indeed the acuteness of sensation, either of joy or pain, that is sharpened into so keen an edge by cultivation and refinement. But there is a tie between her who gives birth, and her who is born,

which seems indissoluble. That mysterious regard, which is said, during the Revolution of the last century in France, to have absorbed all the anxieties of one, who feared she should not become a mother, ere the guillotine had rendered her a corpse, cannot utterly be extinguished by any degradation of intelligence, or the enforcement of the most inhuman habits.

There is a passage quoted by Colonel Walker from the preliminary discourse of Sale's Koran, which is of too much interest to be omitted here. It states, that "the law of Mahomed also put a stop to the inhuman custom, which had been long practised by the pagan Arabs; of burying their daughters alive The manner of destroying them is differently related. Some say, that when an Arab had a daughter born, and he intended to bring her up, he sent her clothed in a garment of wool or hair to keep camels or sheep in the desert: but if he designed to put her to death, he let her live till she became six years old, and then said to her mother: 'Perfume her and adorn her that I may carry her to her mothers.' Which being done the father led her to a well or pit dug for that purpose, and bidding her

look down, pushed her it into it headlong, as he stood behind her; and then filling up the pit levelled it with the rest of the ground.

“The Arabs in the murder of their children were far from being singular, the practice of exposing infants, and putting them to death being so common among the ancients, that it is remarked as a very extraordinary thing in the Egyptians, that they brought up all their children: and by the laws of Lycurgus no child was allowed to be brought up, without the approbation of public officers.”

“Christianity,” said Mr. Wilberforce in 1813, “may justly glory in the acknowledgment of one of its greatest adversaries, that infanticide was the crime of all heathen antiquity.” Infants being exposed is a subject familiar to the most casual reader of history. Moses and Romulus, the Amazons, the legislation of Greece, the Republic of Plato, and the Philosophy of Aristotle, as well as the fires of Moloch, attest the inhuman practices of earlier times. Robertson speaks of child-murder in America; Mr. Collins in New South Wales; Sir John Chardin among the Tartars; Sir George Staunton, and the Jesuits in China. It existed in Otaheite in the time of Captain Cook. It has been ascertained to have been

practised continually and systematically in India ; and, with the never-failing inconsistency of heathen morality, those who would not shed the blood of a brute beast, and, in their tenderness, provided sustenance for insects, participated in, or permitted, the daily murder of their own offspring.

It is difficult to overcome the inveteracy of established custom and prejudice on the one hand, and, on the other, to stir the cautious and tardy exertions of a government so deferential to local opinion, as that of the British empire in the East. A growing interest in the well-being of the natives, as well as a growing conviction, that the security of our Indian possessions will be enhanced by establishing a common sense of morality, has roused the efforts of individuals : but superior authorities have not been so easily moved to support benevolence, which is in advance of them, and have perhaps been afraid of involving themselves in new conflicts, and of being compromised by further expenditure of the public revenues. To the church of this country, as a religious body, and to every member of it, as a sincere Christian, it cannot but be a matter of deepest interest, if not of shame and self-reproach, that their fellow-subjects of the same

earthly sovereign should be utterly estranged from their heavenly one, and that they, who enjoy the fullest knowledge of the revealed will of God, should have subdued the savage tribes of Orissa into submission to their worldly power, but have made no effort to reclaim them from the degradation and horrors of darkest ignorance and crime. To every missionary society the investigations which have been made in the territory of the Konds open a field worthy of their highest enterprise, devotedness, and zeal; the atrocities which have been discovered are well known and freely canvassed in British India; the officers of government employed in Goomsur have been deficient neither in humanity of disposition, nor energy of action; but no religious body seems to have attempted an enterprise so difficult and dangerous as the conversion of the barbarous people to a better sense of right and wrong, much less to Christian faith and practice; no communications have been essayed with them by a religious teacher, except those of one dissenting minister, and the tardy and timid energies of our Protestant Church may be referred for a lesson to the greater boldness of other days, when the apostle of the cross, corrupted as was his faith, braved the tortures

of the North American Indian, in the hope to win a soul to Christ.

In other parts of India infanticide has gradually been abolished, and one anecdote may be admitted here in evidence of the temper which the natives exhibited before and after its abolition. To an application of Colonel Walker on the subject, a chieftain of the Jarejah tribe answered, "It was notorious that the Jarejahs had been in the habit of killing their daughters for four thousand years, and that no doubt, he (the Colonel) was aware, that all of God's creation, even the mighty emperors of Hindostan, Shah Jehan, Aurenzebe, and Akbar, had always preserved friendship with his court, and had never acted in that respect (female infanticide), unreasonably. Even the king of the world had never thought of putting a stop to the custom which prevails among the Jarejahs of killing their daughters." * * * "God is the giver, and God is the taker away; if any one's affairs go to ruin, he must attribute his fortune to God. No one has until this day wantonly quarrelled with this durbar, who has not, in the end, suffered loss." * * *

"Do not address me again on this subject."

A mother even sent a reply to Colonel Walker of the same hopeless tenour.

The attributes of the Deity are introduced with an application somewhat startling to Christian ears; but in spite of the authority thus invoked, within twelve months the writers of these letters, with the Jarejah tribes, formally abjured the practice of infanticide. And about two years after its abolition, when Colonel Walker was again in that part of the country, he caused some of the infants, which had been preserved, to be brought to his tent. Then, to use his own words, "it was extremely gratifying to observe the triumph of nature, feeling, and parental affection, over prejudice, and a horrid superstition; and that those, who but a short period before would (as many of them had done) have doomed their infants to destruction without compunction, should now glory in their preservation, and doat on them with fondness." The Jarejah fathers, who formerly would not have listened to the preservation of their daughters, now exhibited them with pride. Their mothers and nurses also attended on this interesting occasion. True to the feelings which are found in other countries to prevail so forcibly, the emotions of nature exhibited were extremely moving, as the parents placed their infants in the hands of the Colonel, calling on him and their gods to pro-

tect what he alone had taught them to preserve.

But to return to the practices of the Konds. As their avarice is stained with infanticide, their superstition also is blackened with the horrors of human sacrifice. The evidence is such as leaves no room for doubt. Although individuals do not, perhaps, avow to Europeans their own participation in it, they do not deny, but rather justify, the general practice. Portions of victims have been brought to the civil functionaries in Ganjam. The agent of government almost surprised a party in the midst of their ritual orgies: when he arrived at the spot, where sacrifice was to have taken place, the stake was in the ground, and a human being bound to it in preparation for death. The scenes of former immolations have been visited; bits of bones, with the ashes, and remnants of the human frame, have been distinguished. Men, women, and children, have been seen; the young, indeed, at liberty, ignorant of the fate that was impending, but those of riper years in irons, kept like cattle, in readiness for future slaughter. And on the 28th of February, 1838, Captain Campbell wrote:—"I have been most fortunate in my late expedition among the wild Konds of Goomsur,

and have received no less than one hundred and three children of various ages, who were intended for sacrifice by these barbarians, and that without the application of force. These children are now at head-quarters, and form a most interesting group, happy, such as were aware of their situation, in having escaped the fate which awaited them."¹

The savages have a vague and indistinct idea of a supreme intelligence, which orders all things. Their worship is addressed to many gods, the sun, the moon, and the earth (Thadha Pennoo), the great mother, who holds the highest importance in their regards. There are many minor deities also, who can inflict disease and misfortune, if offended. Every incident of importance is deemed the immediate work of a divinity; and every divinity, clothed in terrors, seems to partake of the nature of a fiend.²

¹ *Asiatic Journal*, vol. xxvi. p. 68.

² In a paper read to the Royal Asiatic Society on the 20th of November, 1841, it is stated: "They" (the Konds) "believe that the spirit of man actuates an endless succession of human forms. Some mixture of Hinduism appears in their rever-

The following legend accounts for the institution of human sacrifice among them :—

“Many ages ago,” they say, “when our

ence of Kali, Parvati, and other Hindu deities. Their principal deity, the earth-god, is an abstraction of all that is terrible. He is said to manifest himself occasionally in the form of a tiger, when he issues forth from chinks in the earth.”

“Revelations have prescribed the worship, and ordained the ministers of each divinity. And expressive symbols are sometimes used, protected by rude temples. Sandi Pennoo, the god of limits, has many altars (rude stones smeared with turmeric) on the highways, and each requires an annual sacrifice, a goat, a buffalo, or human victim. Loha Pennoo, or the god of arms, has, in each Kond village, a grove dedicated to him, sacred from the axe, in the centre of which his symbol, a piece of iron, is buried : and he is invoked whenever arms are taken up. The Gram Pennoo, or village god ; Peeta-buldee, the great father god ; and various others, have all their respective symbols and offerings. Dhoongwori Pennoo, or the conservative principle, is also worshipped.” * * * *

“The earth-god, Bera Pennoo, is regarded, first as the supreme power of the universe, and secondly, as the deity, who presides over the productive ener-

fathers first settled in these mountains, they were led by a queen called Attah, (grandmother.) At that time the earth was unstable, and

gies of nature. The Konds consider that he sends periodical rains; rules the order of the seasons; and promotes, or retards the fecundity of the soil, the growth of all rural produce; and that he has the health of the population, and the safety of their flocks and herds in his keeping." * * * *

"The public sacrifices may be described as cereal offerings, health offerings, and offerings on account of the patriarchal families."

It required no great discernment, one would suppose, to perceive that this description accorded but little with an utterly barbarous state of society; and an acquaintance with Eastern dialects would have confirmed the idea of its author having written about a people with whom he had made a very slight acquaintance. It is remarkable that most of the names given to the deities in the extract above, belong to other languages than that which the savages speak. *Sandi is a Telinga, not a Kond, word*, signifying boundary. *Loha is a Hindoostanee, not a Kond, word*, signifying iron. *Gram is a Telinga word*, signifying a village held under peculiar tenure. *Bera* is very much like a Hindoostanee word, signifying great. These are incidents likely to escape

sank under our feet, and was unsuited for the habitation of man. All things were then without order. But Attah, whether by accident or design is not known, cut her finger, and the

notice in England; but a moment's consideration might have discovered that the rude and unlettered ignorance of savage life was not consistent with an intricate and systematic arrangement of powers and attributes, like that of the Hindoo mythology. That portions of the latter have been transferred to the superstition of the Konds, or that there is any assimilation between the two, is denied; though it is not improbable, that on the confines of their territory the simple savages may hold in reverence any gods whom they see their neighbours worship. The precise distribution of offices, and classification of offerings, it is very difficult to attribute to rude capacities; and in many districts they have neither temples, nor places permanently set apart for religious rites; nor a regular order of priesthood. The functions of the Janis, or officiating priests, seem to be in a great measure self-assumed, under the impulse of enthusiasm, or fancied inspiration.

In recent periodicals of the East, the accuracy of the writer is strongly impugned, from whose description of the Konds the extract above has been made.

blood falling on the ground, the latter became firm and fruitful, and durable as a place to dwell in. She saw the efficacy of human blood, and insisted upon being sacrificed herself. Hence we attach such value to human sacrifice, the blood of which falling on the earth produces such benefits. Some time after her death Attah appeared to some of the people, and complained of being alone in the other world, and requested that a man might be sent her for company. Hereupon several human sacrifices were offered: and the practice has continued ever since."

The victims may be of any caste, sex or age. A Kond would not be sacrificed by his own tribe; but would hardly be refused by one at a distance. An adult man is most valuable, and therefore most acceptable: young children can be most easily procured. But whether it is man, or woman, or child, that is destined to appease the demons of their devotions, the offering must be bought at a price.¹ This it is

¹ It is curious to discover among these savages a rule for sacrifice so much resembling what is expressed by David, 2 Sam. xxiv. 24, "And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee

that constitutes its efficacy : and in coincidence with the sentiments of more civilised nations, that which costs man most dear, is also thought most acceptable to God.

The time of sacrifice is determined by the moon, the morning of the full, after the close of harvest, being the great annual occasion. For this the scene of cruel rites is designated, and the community to furnish the offerings appointed, by the elders of the people. The number of victims varies according to the means of providing them, but is not known

at a price: neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing." The words of the man after God's own heart are doubtless to be interpreted in a sense foreign to the intention of the Konds. The true doctrine is beautifully expressed by Micah, vi. 6, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

ever to exceed three. Should there be one only, his immolation is to propitiate the earth : if more than one, the sun and moon respectively are next to be conciliated. The wrath of these fair luminaries also is to be appeased by shedding human blood.

At the season appointed, on the day previous to the sacrifice, the savage multitudes assemble, sometimes in thousands. They carry their rude arms, food, and fermented liquor. The night is spent in orgies half drunken, half devotional. They stimulate each other with the war-dance ; and wild cries, and barbarous yells are re-echoed from group to group ; and draughts of the nauseous "toddy" add new fire to their excitement ; until in mingled fervour and intoxication they become fit instruments of the atrocities they are about to perpetrate. The victim, in whose blood on the morrow their hands will be imbrued, is crowned with flowers, and carried in procession round the village, and served with adulation, as if in mockery of the sufferings he is to endure. At length, in the morning, the priest leads forth, and binds him to a stake fixed upright in the ground. Then the barbarian frenzy is wrought into its fiercer attitudes ; and every movement, and cry, and gesture, exhibits a ferocity, with

which they approach the work of death. The infuriated crowd forms a circle round, dancing, and yelling in savage ecstasy. They brandish their weapons and prepare themselves as for a conflict; while some wild mummeries stand in the place of ceremony, and the Jani's prayer to the earth, "O Thadha Pennoo, we sacrifice to thee, yield us good crops and health," is followed by an address to the wretched being at the stake, to whom it is asserted that he was not stolen, or carried off by force, but bought for money; that his own people, or his own relations had sold him to his present destiny; and that he has no room for reproach or complaint against the Konds.

The fatal moment has now arrived; the Jani gives the signal: and the maddened wretches rush on to cut the living flesh from the frame of their fellow-man, bound, and writhing under the knives, that strip the bones of their vital ligaments and covering. Piece by piece they accomplish the live dissection, till the skeleton and intestines alone remain. Each morsel is the prize of those who have severed it from the body, and is borne off at once to their place of abode. It may not rest till it reaches its destination. If it is to be carried far, relays of men are ready on the

way. And before the sun sets it must be buried, part within the precincts of the village, and part in their adjoining rice-fields.

To augment the catalogue of crimes perpetrated in these fearful rites, the first piece of flesh cut from the victim is more valued than the whole remainder of his body. Village communities select each their champion, and wrap him in an armour of thick cloths, and appoint armed attendants as his body-guard. His part is to rush in first, and secure the object of general competition. If he obtains it, he becomes himself in danger. A morsel of his own flesh, taken while he is carrying off the victim's, is esteemed of equal efficacy. He at once therefore is made the object of attack. His guards endeavour to protect him: they give no direct attention to the sacrifice; but surround, and, if possible, bring off their chief from amid the struggles, and uproar, and conflicts, with which their brother savages oppose his escape. Often more blood is thus shed; and the fury, with which they were incited to take the life of an unresisting victim, finally, arms them in fierce exasperation against each other.

The sacrifice to the earth having been completed, usually to the eastward of the village,

those who are not engaged in carrying off the pieces for burial, if there is to be a second offering, pass over to the opposite or western side. Here they renew their cries, and dance round a pit or trench, at the bottom of which the Jani kills a pig, and mixing the gore with the soil, forms a stiff but moist mud. With some rude ceremonies his assistants introduce a human being; and together they thrust his face into the bloody mire, and there hold it down until life is extinct. Or by another process, the pit having been prepared, and the pig killed, stakes are laid over, the victim is stretched along, and lashed down to them. The Jani with a battle-axe makes six cuts at equal distances across the back, beginning at the lower part. The sixth and last stroke severs the head from the body. And the former falls into the trench, in which the mud has been made ready for its reception.

To complete and consummate these horrors, the third sacrifice is one of protracted torture, in which the suffering of the victim is essential to, and enhances its efficacy. On the south of the village a shed is constructed, and along the top of the roof a human being is extended at full length. With his face downwards, his hands and feet are so fastened, that

he can move his frame from one side of the ridge to the other. His limbs are so far unconfined, that he may struggle freely in excruciating pain, and glut the cruelty of savages by the wildest distortions. Fire on the end of poles is then applied to his naked body, until in agony he writhes from one to the other compartment of the roof. There similar torture again awaits him. And so from side to side, the slow and relentless pangs of a lingering death pursue him, until the exhausted wretch can no more shriek or move. This is the end of the fiendish jubilee. He is taken down, and his head struck off by a Jani. If his cries have been loud and long continued, the sacrifice is deemed acceptable. If he has expired with little outward exhibition of the signs of pain, that is thought of unpropitious omen.

The ceremonial of this day of atrocities is now brought to a conclusion. The remains of the first victim, and the mangled bodies of the other two are collected and burned on the smallest pile of wood that will consume them. The mingled ashes are packed in baskets of bamboo, and distributed to the different parties, and conveyed to their respective villages, and kept until the conclusion of the following

harvest. They are then mixed with water, and serve as a sort of wash to overlay the large vessels, in which the grain is laid up, and which are of wicker work, the interstices being filled with red clay, and the top sealed, when full, with a layer of the same material. Over the whole is smeared the mixture of ashes and water, which superstition invests with extraordinary virtue, and of which the real effect probably is, that it keeps off insects from the store.

Such is the annual public sacrifice during what is termed the Tonkee festival. In the course of a journey through the Ganjam Hills authentic intelligence was obtained, from which it was computed, that 250 human lives were every year there lavished upon these rites only. All the cases could hardly have been ascertained, even in those parts of the hills which were visited; so that this number probably falls short of, rather than exceeds the average. And for other and private purposes human beings may be offered at any season, their number, age, and sex, depending on the circumstances and inclination of him who makes the offering. In 1826 when the Rajah of Bustar visited the Rajah of Nagpoor, to whom he was tributary, his Kond subjects evinced

their concern in the objects of his mission by the slaughter of twenty-five men, and from that event the measure of time has taken its dates during fifteen or sixteen years which have since elapsed. Sickness in a family, murrain among cattle, and almost every kind of misfortune and affliction is supposed to argue the displeasure of a divinity, and becomes the occasion of death to a human being: and it is supposed that the number of private can hardly fail to equal that of public offerings; and that in the Ganjam Hills alone both may be computed to amount to 500 annually. These districts contain about one-third of the Kond population, and if this calculation at all approaches correctness, it is frightful to contemplate the number of men, women, and children, who perish every year, for no other purpose, than that the living may be inured to scenes of bloodshed and atrocity, and that savage nature may revel in the tortures with which a fellow-creature is destroyed. This is indeed to devote whole human hecatombs to the demons of depravity. The people of Christian Europe will hardly bring their minds to conceive the existence of such an enormity in the heart of British India. But it has been ascertained that in one Mootah, or

cluster of villages, as many as 200 intended victims have been at once in captivity. And other monstrous superstitions in India afford humiliating evidence, that the perpetration of such atrocities is by no means inconsistent with human nature in a state of degradation. From remote ages, Eastern nations have sacrificed the living to the dead. Noted by pagan authors as among the earliest who affirmed the immortality of the soul, they have also been the first to introduce, under pretext of religion, the hideous observances of human immolation. They have themselves put an end to their lives here, that they might obtain happiness in a life hereafter. The monster car of Juggernaut has been red with the blood of voluntary victims: and Dr. Carey computed, that, taking all the various modes of destruction formerly connected with the temple in the same province of Orissa, the lives of one hundred thousand human beings were annually expended in the service of that one idol.

To supply victims for the monstrous massacres perpetrated by the Konds, the Pauns, a base and degraded race of Ooriahs, maintain an infamous traffic in human beings. These wretches, themselves Hindoos, inhabit tracts of jungle at the foot of the hills; and their

chief occupation is in marauding excursions, or to kidnap men, women, and children, whom they can secretly or safely make away with. As a cloak for these pursuits they carry on a petty trade with the Konds in salt, dried fish, and similar articles of merchandise. And one method of conducting their more nefarious traffic is by hiring a cooly (porter) to carry their wares into the villages, where the unfortunate man is seen, approved of, and bargained for, the price determined, and his fate sealed, ere a suspicion warns him of his danger. He is overpowered while asleep, and thrown into irons; or invited to a drinking party, and plied with liquor by perfidious comrades, who secure their guest with fetters as soon as he is intoxicated; and he learns the treachery of a deep carouse when it is too late. Children are more easily decoyed from their homes, and sold. They are usually received into the family of the purchasers, and kindly treated, and left at liberty, in ignorance of their destiny, until the fatal day approaches. Many of the little creatures are kept till they arrive at years of maturity, bred, and fattened, like lambs for the shambles. As they advance in years, should they suspect their danger, and shew inclination to escape, they are

put in irons, and confined until occasion calls for their death.

It was at first supposed, that the Konds never sacrificed one of their own race.

“ Neque hic lupis mos, nec fuit leonibus,”
Nunquam nisi in dispar feris.”—HOR. *Ep.* 7, 11.

But it has since been ascertained, that lineage obtains no exemption : and they themselves sell their relations, and even their own children to neighbouring communities. The price paid for a full-grown man varies from fifteen to twenty rupees (thirty to eighty shillings) : that for children depends on their size and sex, being sometimes as low as two rupees. The purchase is effected either in money, or more commonly in bullocks, buffaloes, brass pots, and turmeric.

From the initiatory stratagem of the Pauns, to the tragic scene of last agonies at the stake, the whole system seems the most heartless, savage, and debasing, that human nature could have been deemed capable to contrive. The stealing of the child, or seizure of the man decoyed under pretence of employment ; the calculating trade in human life, which becomes a profession ; the deliberate barter of children for turmeric to the value of four shillings

apiece, that they may be kept up as animals for slaughter ; the utter disregard of a fellow-creature's suffering, except to exult in the convulsions of his agony ; and the brutal dissection of a living man into morsels yet quivering with animation, forms a picture more revolting to humanity, than all the horrors history has recorded, or the imagination could have conjured up. The Hindoo Triad may have had their human sacrifice, when "the tears, prayers, and caresses even, which the victim lavished on his murderers," were regarded with perfect indifference:¹ but his torture was not the immediate means of propitiation, or measure of its efficacy. The ancient Goths may every ninth month have witnessed the dying struggles of nine fellow-creatures : but the fatal blow had been at once struck, and the blood sprinkled on the idol, and groves, and surrounding multitude, before the lifeless bodies were consumed in the sacred fire. The Druids sacrificed men ; but they were criminals, or solaced with the assurance of eternal happiness in another world ; and heathen Rome forbade their sanguinary rites, so soon as they bent the knee

¹ See Bishop Heber's Correspondence.

to the imperial eagle. The Carthaginians may have brought up children for their altars: "but the Romans," says Montesquieu, "deserved well of human nature, for making it an article of treaty with them, that they should no longer sacrifice their offspring to their gods." Parents may have offered their own sons and daughters to Baal and Ashtaroth: but parental tenderness was not wholly extinguished; and they paid the penalty of their abominations in their destruction by the chosen agents of the Almighty.

And what a conception of idolatry here forces itself upon the mind, and of the interests we have at stake in keeping the first commandment, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me." It is by acquaintance with such horrors, that the hearts and habits of the heathen have become savage and deformed. The service of corrupt and false deities has engendered corruption, falsehood, and truculence, until human nature has become denaturalised, and beings in the form of man have been degraded lower than the brutes which perish. As if what came to pass upon Nebuchadnezzar, that he dwelt with the beasts of the field, and did eat grass as oxen, till he knew that the Most High ruled in the kingdom of men; was

intended as a universal lesson to all mankind, to teach them the debasement and the curse, that awaits all those, who let go their hold on the knowledge of the living God.

Yet there are men in this Christian country, who question the advantage of churches, and schools, and means of religious instruction for the masses of the people. There are some, even of those who shew signs of a Christian charity in what relates to bodily necessities—who bestow food and clothing on the destitute, yet shut up their compassion and bounty against the claims of the knowledge of God, and the spiritual food, that will nourish and enlighten the soul both in this world and the next. One is called the want of nature, as if human nature did not as much want the other : and deprivation of one absorbs all sympathy, as if the effects of deprivation in the other were not equally lamentable : and in one Christians think they fulfil their duty, as if the other was not equally imperative.

It might have been supposed, that sufficient barriers against such atrocities as have been described, had been implanted in the affections, which act as an instinct in the most savage beast of the forest ; but, as if to shew, that man's unassisted nature is the worst of

all, history sacred and profane is alike full of the records of similar crime. In all ages, and in all countries the services of false deities have been stamped with the same character, and produced the same moral results. Ahaz "made his son to pass through the fire according to the abominations of the heathen."¹ The king of Moab offered the eldest son of the king of Edom for a burnt-offering.² "Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan," says the Psalmist of rebellious Israel.³ And the Book of Wisdom presents a fearful image of the old inhabitants, whom the Israelites had been commanded to destroy: "Those merciless murderers of children, and devourers of men's flesh, and feasts of blood, with their priests out of the midst of their idolatrous crew, and the parents that killed with their own hands souls destitute of help."⁴ A touching picture of those sacrifices has since been drawn: "Suppose a father leading the dearest of his sons to such an infernal shrine, or a

¹ 2 Kings, xvi. 3.

² 2 Kings, iii. 27.

³ Psalm cvi.

⁴ Wisdom, xii. 6.

mother the most engaging and affectionate of her daughters, just rising to maturity, that she might be slaughtered to the idol. An only child was held most acceptable, because most dear. There was so much of natural affection yet unextinguished, as to render the scene ten times more revolting ; and so much of tenderness as to harrow the hardest heart. The parents embraced the victim with fondness. They encouraged him in the gentlest terms, that he might not be appalled at the sight of the horrid process. They exhorted him to submit with cheerfulness to the fearful ordinance. If a tear rose, or a cry unawares escaped, the mother smothered it with caresses, that there might not be any show of backwardness or constraint. Amid these cruel endearments they stabbed him to the heart : and with the blood warm as it ran, besmeared the altar, and grim visage of the idol."

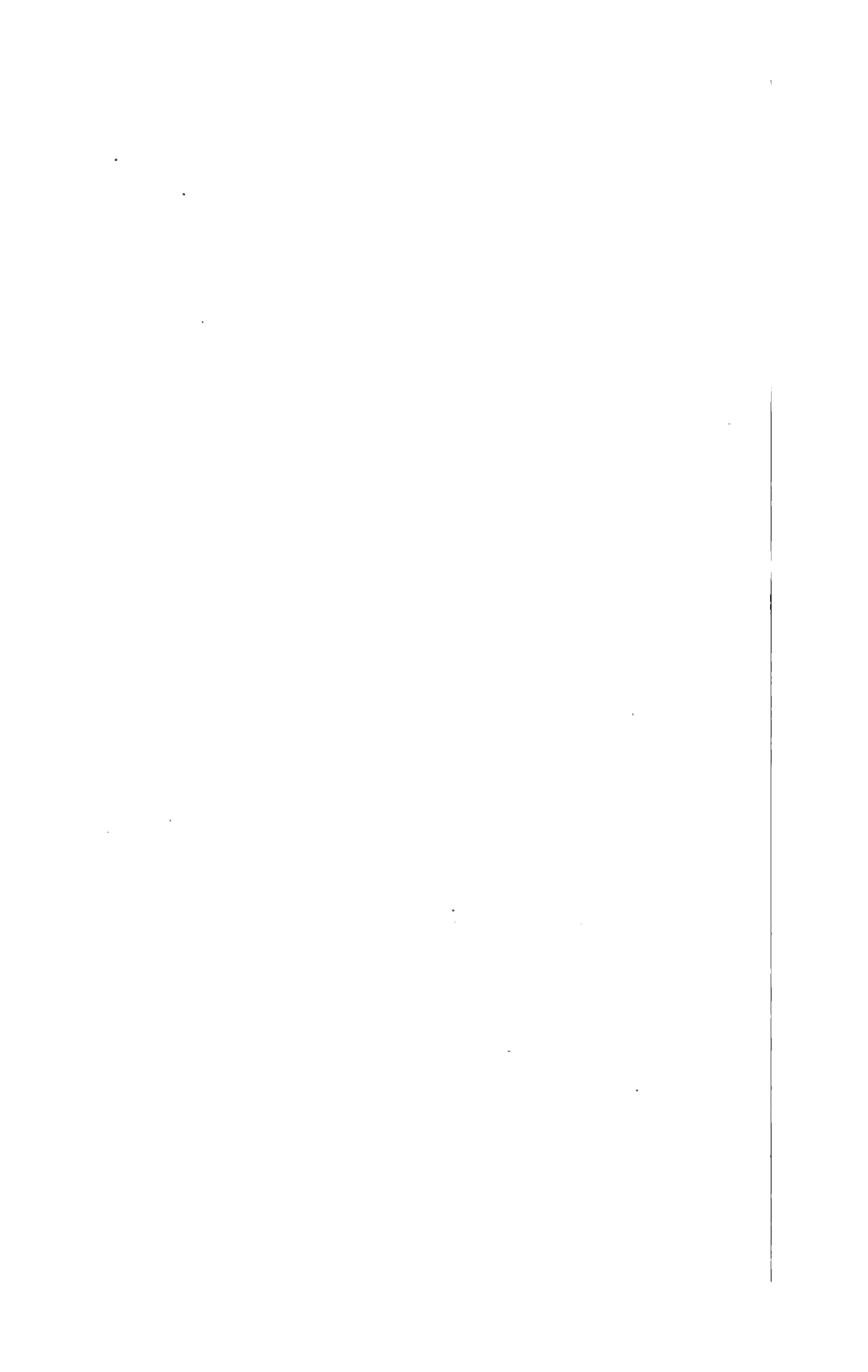
In coincidence with this description was much of what was reported, so lately as 1838, to be done by the Rajah of Burdwan ; especially when the young rajah was ill of the small-pox. In this case too the sacrifice claimed to be voluntary with a similar mockery of truth ; and an only son was the victim preferred. Sickness has in all ages created

occasion of these fearful rites. And the depravity that must result from them has not escaped the observation of antiquity. "Etiamsi quando aliquo metu adducti deos placandos esse arbitrantur, humanis hostiis eorum aras ac templa funestant," says Cicero of the Gauls:¹ "ut ne religionem quidem colere possint, nisi eam prius scelere violarint. . . . Quamobrem, quali fide, quali pietate existimatis esse eos, qui etiam deos immortales arbitrentur hominum scelere et sanguine facillime posse placari." Yet as late as after the battle of Cannæ, in Rome itself, his own countrymen had done the same thing. And in that his own age they consecrated the murderous exhibitions of their amphitheatre to the honour of their deities; as soon in the barbarous persecution of Christians they became "drunken in the blood of the Saints;" and already in their civil dissensions they had been in that of each other. And in our own memory one of the most civilised nations of Europe has put off humanity, when it put aside the knowledge of God. And Saint Guillotine, canonised by recreant priests, and an apostate people, was but the image of the ensanguined altars of

¹ Pro M. Fonteio, s. 10.

idolatry always the same, the modern Moloch, twin brother of the monsters of Indian superstition. To use the language of Bossuet,¹ “ Les sacrifices n'étoient pas particuliers à ces peuples. On sait que dans tous les peuples du monde, sans en excepter aucun, les hommes ont sacrifié leurs semblables ; et il n'y a point eu d'endroit sur la terre, où on n'ait servi de ces tristes et affreuses divinités, dont la haine implacable pour le genre humain exigeait de telles victimes.”

¹ Sur l'Histoire Universelle.



Price Six Shillings,

PRACTICAL SERMONS,

PREACHED IN

HANOVER CHAPEL, REGENT STREET,

BY THE

REV. G. D. HILL,

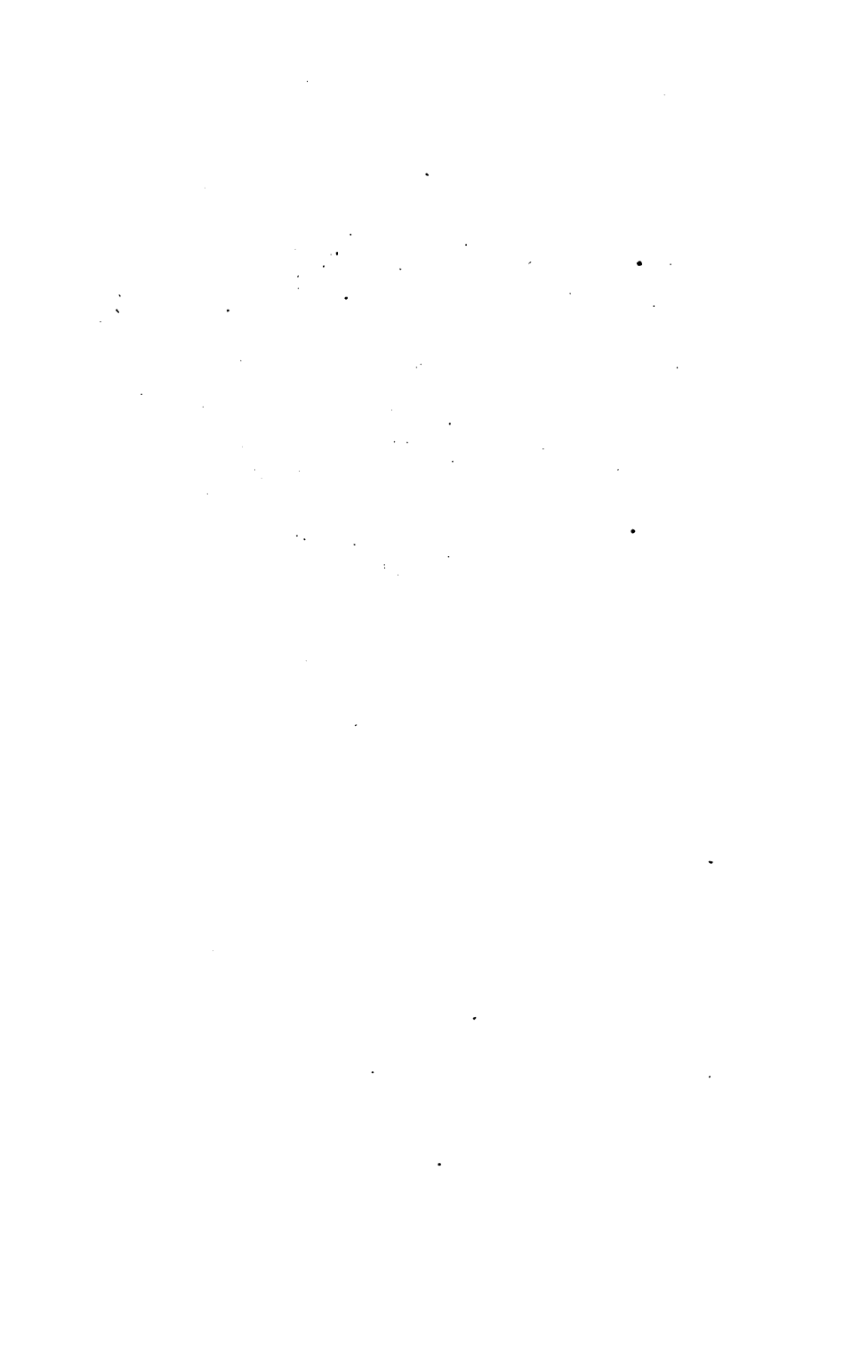
Assistant Curate.

LONDON: RIVINGTONS.

“Of this volume of Sermons we cannot speak in terms of sufficient admiration; they are truly what they profess to be—‘Practical Sermons.’ The author has the very rare power of keeping to his subject, exhibiting a beautiful unity of thought throughout the whole of his discourses—not dividing and subdividing them, as is too common with those who are deficient in comprehensiveness of mind, and who branch out into several subjects, in order to conceal their inability to treat properly of *one*. In this respect alone these Sermons are worthy of all imitation, but only a perusal of them can give an adequate idea of the simplicity of diction, combined with the elegance of imagination, which they display. We cannot resist giving one short extract, which will be sufficient to shew we have not spoken too highly of their merits,” &c.—*Church of England Quarterly Review.*

“Mr. Hill’s Sermons are plain, judicious, and practical.”—*English Review.*





1

2

3

4

